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THE AGE OF THE ANTONINES

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EPOCHS OF ANCIENT HISTORY

EDITED BY

REV. G. W. COX, M A. AND C. SANKEY, M.A.

THE

ROMAN EMPIRE of the SECOND CENTURY

W. W. CAPES, M.A.

EPOCHS OF ANCIENT HISTORY.

THE ROMAN EMPIRE

OF THE

SECOND CENTURY

OR

THE AGE OF THE ANTONINES,

BY

W. W. CAPES, M.A.

LATE FELLOW AND TUTOR OF QUEEN'S COLLEGE, AND
READER IN ANCIENT HISTORY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD.

WITH TWO MAPS.

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THE AGE OF THE ANTONINES.

CHAPTER I.

NERVA. A. D. 96–98.

BEFORE the murderers of Domitian raised their hands to strike the fatal blow, they looked around, we read, to find a successor to replace him. Others whom they sounded on the subject shrunk away in fear or in suspicion, till they thought of M. Cocceius Nerva, who was likely to fill worthily the office that would soon be vacant.

Nerva raised to the throne by the murderers of Domitian,

Little is known of his career for more than sixty years, till after he had twice been consul, and when his work seemed almost done, he rose for a little while to take the highest place on earth. The tyrant on the throne had eyed him darkly, had banished him because he heard that the stars pointed in his case to the signs of sovereign power, and indeed only spared his life because other dabblers in the mystic lore said that he was fated soon to die. The sense of his danger, heightened by his knowledge of the plot, made Nerva bold when others

flinched; so he lent the conspirators his name, and rose by their help to the imperial seat. He had dallied with the Muses, and courted poetry in earlier years; but he showed no creative aims as ruler, and no genius for heroic measures. The fancy or the sanguine confidence of youth was chequered perhaps by waning strength and feeble health, or more probably a natural kindliness of temper made him more careful of his people's wants. After the long nightmare of oppression caused by the caprices of a moody despot, Rome woke again to find herself at rest under a sovereign who indulged no wanton fancies, but was gentle and calm and unassuming, homely in his personal bearing, and thrifty with the coffers of the state. He had few expensive tastes, it seemed, and little love for grand parade, refusing commonly the proffered statues and gaudy trappings of official rank. As an old senator, he felt a pride in the dignity of the august assembly, consulted it in all concerns of moment, and pledged himself to look upon its members' lives as sacred. A short while since and they were cowering before Domitian's sullen frown, or shut up in the senate house by men-at-arms while the noblest of their number were dragged out before their eyes to death. But now they had an Emperor who treated them as his peers, who listened patiently to their debates, and met them on an easy footing in the courtesies of social life. He rose above the petty jealousy which looks askant at brilliant powers or great historic names, and chose even as his colleague in the consulship the old Verginius Rufus, in whose hands once lay the imperial power had he only cared to grasp it. Nor was he haunted by suspicious fears, such as sometimes give the timid a fierce appetite

rules with gentle moderation,

treating the senate with respect,

for blood. For when he learnt that a noble of old family had formed a plot against his life, he took no steps to punish him, but kept him close beside him in his train, talked to him at the theatre with calm composure, and even handed him a sword to try its edge and temper, as if intent to prove that he had no mistrustful or revengeful thought.

There were many indeed to whom he seemed too easy-going, too careless of the memories of wrong-doing, to satisfy their passionate zeal for justice. There were those who had seen their friends or kinsmen hunted to death by false accusers, who thought that surely now at length they might wreak their vengeance on the tyrant's bloodhounds. The early days of Nerva's rule seemed to flatter all their hopes, for the prison doors were opened to let the innocent go forth, while their place was taken by spies and perjurers and all the harpies who had preyed on noble victims. For a while it seemed as if the days of retribution were at hand, but the Emperor's gentle temper, or the advice of wary counsellors, prevailed; Nerva soon stayed his hand, and would not have the first pages of his annals scored in characters of blood. To many, such clemency seemed idle weakness; Pliny, humane and tender-hearted as he was, reflects in his familiar letters the indignation of his class, and sorely frets to think of the great criminals who flaunted in the eyes of men the pride of their ill gotten wealth. He tells with a malicious glee the story of a supper-party in the palace, where the name of a notorious informer happened to come up, and first one and then another of the guests told tale after tale of his misdeeds, till the Emperor asked at last what could be done with

and the agents of past tyranny with forbearance,

though Pliny and others cried for vengeance. (Pl. Ep. iv. 22.)

him if he were living still. Whereupon one bolder than the rest replied, "he would be asked to supper with us here to-night;" and indeed close beside Nerva there was lolling on the couch an infamous professor of the same black art. We may read, too, in a letter written long afterwards to a young friend, how Pliny came forward in the senate to laud the memory of the great Helvidius, and brand with infamy the wretch who caused his death.

Ep. ix. 13.

At first he found scant sympathy from those who heard him. Some troubled with a guilty conscience tried to drown his voice in clamour, on the plea that no notice had been given of his motion; some begged him not to raise the ghosts of worn-out feuds, but to let them rest in peace awhile after the long reign of terror. Wary friends, too, warned him to be cautious, lest he should make himself a mark for the jealousy of future rulers. But Pliny was resolute and persevered. The consul, who acted as Speaker in the senate, silenced him indeed at first, but let him rise at length in his own turn, and, leaving the subject then before the house, speak for the memory of his injured friend, till the full stream of his indignant eloquence carried the listening senators along, and swept away the timid protests raised for the accused. The Emperor stepped in, and stayed proceedings in the senate; but the orator recalled with pride in later years the enthusiasm which his vehemence had stirred, and felt no throb of pity in his kindly heart when he was told that the wretched man whom he accused was haunted soon after in his dying moments by his own stern look and passionate words.

But Nerva was determined to let the veil fall on the past. He raised no question about the favours and the boons of earlier rulers, but respected the immunities and dispensations however carelessly bestowed.

There were still three powers that must be reckoned with before any government could feel secure—the populace of Rome, the frontier legions, and the prætorian guards. The first looked to be courted and caressed as usual; but the treasury was empty, and Nerva was too thrifty to spend lavishly on the circus or the theatres or the processions which helped to make a Roman holiday. Still he was careful of the real interests of the poor; he gave large sums for land to be granted freely to the colonists who would exchange the lounging indolence of Rome for honest industry in country work. Where funds were wanting for this purpose, he stripped the palace of its costly wares, sold even the heirlooms of his family, and gave up houses and broad lands to carry out his plans for the well-being of his subjects. To show that such self-sacrifice was due to no caprice of passing fancy, he had the new name of "The Palace of the People" set up in characters which all might read upon the mansion of the Cæsars, while the coins that were struck in his imperial mint bore the old name of Liberty upon their face. For he tried, says Tacitus, to reconcile the claims of monarchy and freedom—the two things found incompatible before.

Nerva's measures for the poorer citizens.

Agric. 3.

The distant legions had suffered little from Domitian's misrule. His father and brother had been generals of mark, and the thought of his own inglorious campaigns soon faded from their memory; they knew him chiefly as a liberal paymaster and indulgent chief, and they heard with discontent that the Flavian dynasty had fallen, and that Rome had chosen a new ruler. The soldiers on the Danube broke out into open riot when they heard the news, and talked of marching to avenge their mas-

The mutiny on the Danube appeased by Dion Chrysostom.

ter. But by good hap, a certain Dion, a poor wandering scholar, was at hand. Driven by the fallen tyrant into exile as a philosopher of note, he had lived a vagrant life upon the frontier, working for a paltry pittance as a gardener's daily drudge, and carrying in his little bundle, for the solace of his leisure, only the Phædon of Plato and a single oration of Demosthenes. Roused now to sudden action by the mutiny among the legions, he flung aside, like the hero of the Odyssey, the rags that had disguised him, and gathering a crowd together he held the rude soldiers spellbound by the charms of an eloquence which had won for him the name of Chrysostom or Golden-mouthed, while he called up before their fancy the outrages that had wearied a long-suffering world, and armed against the despot the foes of his own household. So Dion's well-turned phrases, on which his biographer dwells with admiring pride, soothed the excited mutineers, and caused the bonds of discipline to regain their hold.

But the prætorians were dangerously near to Rome, and had already learnt their power to set up or to dethrone their rulers. Their generals-in-chief had taken part in the murder of Domitian, and had influence enough at first to keep their troops in hand, and make them swear fealty to another Emperor. But discontent soon spread among them; the creatures of Domitian plied them with intrigues, and found mouths ready to complain of scanty largess and of slow promotion under the influence of the new régime. The smouldering fire soon burst into a flame. The guards marched in open riot to the palace with ominous cries, and clamoured for the murderers' heads. It was in vain that Nerva tried to soothe their

The riotous violence of the prætorians

fury; in vain he bared his neck and bade them strike; the ringleaders would have their will, and dragged their victims off to death before the feeble Emperor's eyes. Such a confession of his weakness was fatal, as he felt, to his usefulness as a ruler. He knew that stronger hands than his were needed to steer the state through the troubled waters, and he resolved to choose at once a worthy colleague and successor.

caused the Emperor to choose Trajan as colleague and successor. A. D. 97.

He chose with a rare unselfishness no kinsman or intimate of his own, not even a noble of old Roman lineage, but a soldier of undoubted merit, who was then in high command among the legions on the German frontier. A few days afterwards the Emperor made his way in state to the temple on the Capitol, to offer thanks for the news of victory just brought from Pannonia to Rome, and there, in the hearing of the crowd, he adopted Trajan as his son, with an earnest prayer that the choice might prove a blessing to the state. Then in the senate house he had the name of Cæsar given to his partner in the cares of office, and that done, soon passed away from life, after sixteen months of rule, which served only as a fitting prelude to the government of his successor.

CHAPTER II.

TRAJAN. A.D. 97–117.

MARCUS ULPIUS TRAJANUS, a native of Italica in Spain, had been trained from early youth in the hard discipline of Roman warfare, and by long service in the camps had earned a title to the round of civil honours, and to a place among the senators of Rome. Summoned by Domitan

Trajan avenges the outrage done to Nerva,

from Spain at the head of a legion to the Rhine, he had come probably too late to help in quelling a revolt; but he had won by his promptitude the honour of a consulship, and was advanced by Nerva to the command of upper Germany, then the most important of provincial offices, in which his energy was being proved when the unlooked for news arrived that he was chosen for the imperial succession; and the tidings of Nerva's death found him still busy with his military duties on the Rhine. He was yet in the full vigour of his manhood when the cares of state fell with the purple mantle on his shoulders; the changing scenes of his laborious life had taught him experience of men and manners, and it was with no wavering hands that he took up the reins of office, and he grasped them firmly to the end. Mutiny and discontent seemed to have vanished already at his name; but he had not forgotten the outrage done to Nerva, nor the parting charge in which he prayed him, like the aged Chryses in the words of Homer, "to avenge the suppliant's unavailing tears." Trajan was prompt and secret. The ringleaders of the riot were called away to Germany on various pleas, and none came back to tell how they were treated there.

A.D. 97.

A.D. 98. Jan.

Il. I. 42.

But though he could enforce discipline with needful rigour, he had no lack of reverence for constitutional forms. One of his earliest official acts was a letter to the senate, full of regard for its august traditions, in the course of which he promised to respect the life of every man of worth. The credulous fancy of the age, as reported in the history of Dion Cassius, saw the motive for the promise in a dream, in which a venerable figure came before him, clad in a purple robe and with a garland on his head—

but writes to the senate in respectful terms.

such as was the painter's symbol for the senate—and laid his finger upon Trajan's neck, leaving his signet stamp first on one side and then upon the other. Whatever we may think the cause, whether sense of justice or mysterious warning prompted him to write that letter, he tried certainly to make good the promise it contained, and trod the dizzy heights of absolute power with the calmness of a serene and balanced temper. He was in no haste to enter Rome or receive the homage of the senate and the people. Perhaps he breathed more freely in the camp, where he lived as simply as his ancient comrades, and mistrusted the parade and insincerity of the great city. Perhaps he waited till he felt his throne secure, and till he knew that the far-off legions had ratified the choice of Nerva.

After a year's delay enters Rome without parade, A. D. 99.

At length, after a year's delay, he quietly set out upon the journey, without any stately train of followers to burden with exactions the towns through which they passed. The only trace of ostentation which he showed was in publishing the items of his travelling expenses side by side with the accounts of the processions of Domitian.

The simple bearing of his wife Plotina.

At his first entry into Rome there was the same absence of parade. He eschewed the white horses and triumphal car of the imperial pageants; no numerous body-guard kept the people at a distance, but as his manly figure moved along the streets, men saw him interchange a hearty greeting with the senators he met, and pass no old acquaintance unobserved. They marked also the same simple earnestness in the bearing of his wife Plotina, who walked calmly by his side, and as she passed into the palace that was now to be her

home, prayed with a quiet emphasis, in the hearing of the crowd, that she might leave it in the same temper that she entered it.

A like unassuming spirit was shown in Trajan's dealings with the senate. He called upon it to resume its work as in an age of freedom, and to acknowledge the responsibilities of power. He honestly respected its traditions, and wished the government to be carried forward in its name. The holders of official rank were encouraged to look upon themselves as ministers of state and not as servants of the Cæsar; and the new generals of the imperial guards had their swords given them with the words, "Use this in my defence while I rule justly, but against me if I prove to be unworthy." For there was little danger now that the old constitutional forms should be misused. The senate was no longer an assembly of great nobles, proudly reliant on the traditions of the past, and on the energy which had laid the world prostrate at their feet. Many of the old families had passed away; their wealth, their eminence, their historic glories had made them victims to a tyrant's jealousy or greed. Their places had been taken by new comers from the provinces or creatures of imperial favour, and a century had passed away since the senate of the commonwealth had claimed or had deserved to rule. The ancient offices, even the consulship itself, were little more than empty honours, and therefore passed rapidly from hand to hand; and even Pliny, full as he was of sentimental reverence for the past, asked himself if the tribunate which he held awhile had indeed any meaning for his days, or was only a venerable sham. Hence Trajan, strong and self-reliant though he was, had no jealousy

Trajan's respect for the forms of the constitution,

which, venerable as they were, had no real power.

of names and titles, and cared little for the outer forms, so the work was done as he would have it. He had little interest in meddling with the mere machinery of government, and though some parts were chiefly ornamental, and others seemed rusty and out-worn, yet he would not pull the whole to pieces, for the sake of symmetry and finish, if there were only working wheels enough to bear the necessary strain. He knew that from the force of habit men loved the venerable forms, and that vital changes soon grew crusted over with the fanciful associations of the past, till all seemed old while all was really new. So new coins came from his mints with the symbols of the old republic; his courtiers were allowed to guard with reverent care their statues of Brutus and Cassius and the Catos, and the once dreaded name of liberty came freely to the pen of every writer of his day.

His homely manners and frank courtesy

He shrank with instinctive modesty from the naked assertion of his power; not like Augustus from fear or hypocritic craft, and therefore with the sense of life-long self-restraint, but with the frankness of a soldier who disliked high airs and stiff parade. He went about the streets almost unguarded, allowed suitors of every class an easy access to his chamber, and took part with genial courtesy in the social gatherings of Rome.

and fearless confidence.

Flattering phrases had no music for his ear, and made him feel none of the divinity of kingship; so he delayed as long as possible the customary honours for his kinsmen, and flatly refused to pose himself as a deity before the time. It was therefore only natural for him to rebuke the officious zeal of the informers who reported words or acts of seeming disrespect, and the old laws of treason which had covered charges, so fatal because so ill-defined,

dropped for a while at least into abeyance. After the morbid suspicions of Domitian men could hardly understand at first the fearless trustfulness of the present ruler, and still told him of their fears and whispered their misgivings of many a possible malcontent and traitor.

One case of this kind may be singled out to throw light upon the Emperor's temper. Licinius Sura was one of the wealthiest of living Romans, and a marked figure in the social circles in which the intimates of Trajan moved. He had won his sovereign's confidence, who owed his throne, as it was said, to Sura's influence when Nerva was looking round for a successor. Yet sinister rumours of disloyal plots were coupled with his name, and zealous friends soon brought the stories to the Emperor's ear, and wearied him with their repeated warnings. At last he started on a visit to Licinius himself, sent his guards home, and chatted freely with his host, then asked to see the servant who acted as the doctor of the house, and had himself dosed for some slight ailment. After this he begged to have his friend's own barber sent to him to trim his beard as he sat talking on; and that done, he stayed to dinner, took his leave, and went away without one word or symptom of suspicion. Ever afterwards he said to those who came to him with any ugly tale about Licinius, "Why did he spare me then, when he had me in his power, and his servant's hand was on my throat?"

But probably his special merit in the eyes of all classes in Italy save the very poorest was his frugal thrift. Augustus had husbanded with care the resources of the state and restored the financial credit of the empire; but he drew largely from the purses of his subjects, had recourse at first to proscriptions and forced loans, and in spite of angry

His frugal thrift,

clamour had imposed succession duties which were odious to all the wealthy Romans. Vespasian had ruled with wise economy and replenished his exhausted coffers; but then his name recalled the memory of a mean and sordid parsimony that trafficked and haggled for the pettiest gains. Most of the other Cæsars had supplied their needs by rapine; had struck down wealthy victims when they coveted their lands or mansions, or had let the informers loose upon their prey, to harry and to prosecute, and to rake the spoils into the Emperor's privy purse. But Trajan checked with a firm hand all the fiscal abuses of the last century that were brought before his eye, withdrew all bounties and encouragements from the informers, and had the disputed claims of his own agents brought before the courts of law and decided on their legal merits. The presents which town councils and other corporate bodies had offered to each sovereign at his accession had grown into a burdensome exaction, and they heard with thankfulness that Trajan would take nothing at their hands.

and wish to lighten the burdens of taxation,

The pressure of the succession duties too was lightened; near kinsmen were exempted from the charge, and a minimum of property was fixed below which the heir paid nothing. Men's dying wishes also were respected. No longer were greedy hands laid on their property in the interests of Cæsar, nor quibbling charges brought to quash their wills; the legacies that fell to Trajan were the tokens of a genuine regard, and not the poor shifts of a dissembling fear which sacrificed a part to save the rest.

A financial policy so just and liberal was hailed on all sides with a hearty welcome, but shrewd heads may well have thought there was a danger that such self-denial

excite the surprise of Pliny.

might be pushed too far. The cool accountants and close-handed agents of the treasury murmured probably that the state would be bankrupt if systems so lax came into vogue; and even Pliny in his stately panegyric, after a passing jest at their expense, stays the current of his unbroken praise to hint that there may possibly be rocks ahead. "When I think," he says "of the loyal offerings declined, of the imperial dues remitted by the treasury, of the informers thrust aside, and then again of the largess granted to the soldiers and the people, I am tempted to enquire whether you have balanced carefully enough the ways and means of the imperial budget." And indeed the Roman ruler's purse was not too full, nor was it an easy task to meet the calls upon it.

A.D. 100.

The charges of the civil service were a new burden of the empire. In the best days of the republic men served their country from a sense of duty or for honour; in the worst age of its decline they received no pay directly from the state, but pillaged the poor provincials at their mercy. Now salaries were given to all the officials of the central government throughout the Roman world, save a few only in the capital, and the outlay on this head tended always to mount higher as the mechanism in each department grew more complex. The world had been conquered at the first by troops of citizens, serving only on short campaigns; and in after years the needy soldiers of the later commonwealth were in great measure fed and pensioned out of the plunder of the provinces: but the standing armies now encamped upon the borders of the empire, though small if measured by the standard of our modern life, were large enough to make their maintenance a problem somewhat hard to solve. The dissolute popu-

Economy could save little

lace of Rome, too proud to work but not to beg, looked to have their food and pleasures provided for them by the state, and were likely to rise in riotous discontent if their civil list were pared too close.

Under these heads there was little saving to be made, and it remained only for the Emperor to stint himself. Happily he had few costly tastes, no pampered favourites to be endowed, no passion for building sumptuous palaces, no wish to squander the revenues of a province on a single stately pageant, to be a nine days' wonder to the world.

except in the Emperor's personal expenditure.

He was blessed too with a wife of rare discretion. Content like the old Roman matrons to rule her house with singleness of heart and be the life-long partner of her husband's cares, Plotina showed no restless vanity as the queen of changing fashions in the gay society of the great city, but discouraged luxury and ostentation, and was best pleased to figure in the coinage of her times as the familiar type of wifely fidelity and womanly decorum. Little was spent upon the imperial household, but there was large outlay on great public works, planned and carried out with grand magnificence. Gradually by patient thrift the funds were gathered for such ends as trade revived, and credit was restored, and capital came forth once more from its hiding places in an epoch of mutual confidence and justice. As the national wealth increased under the influence of favouring conditions, the burdens of taxation pressed less heavily, while the revenues of the state grew larger every year.

Large outlay on public works,

Safety and ease of intercourse are among the primary needs of civilized life, and the Romans might be proud of being the great road-makers of the ancient world. But of late years, we read, the

on roads,

needful works had been neglected, and some of the famous highways of old times were fast falling into disrepair. The Appian above all, the queen of roads as it had once been styled, was figured in the coins and bas-reliefs of Trajan's reign as a woman leaning on a wheel, and imploring the Emperor to come to her relief. Succour was given with a liberal hand, and where it ran through the dangerous Pontine marshes, foundations of solid stone were raised above the surface of the boggy soil, bridges were built over the winding rivulets, and houses of refuge erected here and there along the way.

Other parts of Italy were also the objects of like care. Three new roads at least connected the great towns that lay upon the coast, and though the fragmentary annals of the times make no mention of them, the milestones or monuments since found speak of the careful forethought of the ruler whose name they bore. We have also in like forms in other countries the same enduring witnesses to roads and works like the famous bridge of Alcantara; and the cost of these was sometimes met by his own privy purse, sometimes by the imperial treasury, or else by the corporate funds of neighbouring towns.

and bridges,

Much was done too in the interests of trade to open up Italy to foreign navies. The old port of Ostia, deepened and improved a century before, had been nearly choked by sand and mud. Fresh efforts were now made to arrest the forces of decay, and under the new name of Trajan's Port it appears upon the faces of the coins as a wide bay in which triremes could ride at anchor. But Rome seemed to need a safer outlet to the sea, as the old one at the Tiber's mouth was really doomed to fail. A new port was therefore made at Centumcellæ, the Civita

and ports,

A D. 106 or 107.

Vecchia of later days: Pliny, who went there on a visit when the work was going on, describes in lively style what was being done before his eyes, and tells of the break-water which, rising at the entrance of the harbour, looked almost like a natural island, though formed of rocks from the mainland. Pliny, vi. 31.

A third work of the same kind was carried forward on the other coast, in the harbour of Ancona; and a grand triumphal arch, built of enormous blocks of stone, is left still standing to record the senate's grateful praises of the ruler who had spent so much of his own purse to open Italy and make the seas secure. The Isthmus of Suez too was cared for in the interests of trade; and the name of Trajan which it bears in Ptolemy points to the efforts of the monarch to carry out the needful works in connexion with the granite quarries of the neighbouring Claudian range, in which inscriptions of the period are found. Nor was Rome neglected while other lands were cared for. The great aqueducts of the republic and the early empire were not now enough to content the citizens of Rome, and complaints were often heard that the streams of water brought in them from the hills far away were often turbid and impure, and polluted by the carelessness of those who used them. But now the various sources of supply were kept carefully distinct, a lake was formed in and reserved for separate uses; which the waters of the Anio might stand and clear themselves after their headlong course over the rough mountain ground; and besides these and the purer streams of the Aqua Marcia, others were provided by the bounty of the present ruler and specially ho- before A. D. 109. and aqueducts. A. D. 110.

noured with his name. For nearly 300,000 Roman paces the various aqueducts were carried on the long lines of countless arches, and their vast remains still move the traveller's wonder as he sees them stretch from the city walls far into the Campagna, or perhaps even more as he comes here and there upon some stately fragment in the lonely valleys of the Sabine hills.

The policy of the great statesmen of the Augustan age, the vanity and pomp of other rulers, had filled the capital with great buildings destined for every variety of use; but as if the supply was still too scanty, fresh baths and porticoes and theatres were raised to speak to future ages of the sovereign who lived simply but built grandly. For his own personal comfort, it would seem, no mason toiled, and when the great circus was enlarged to hold some thousand more spectators, the Emperor's balcony was swept away, and no projecting lines were left to interrupt the people's view. Pliny had once said of him, in the formal eulogy of earlier days, that his modesty of temper led him to preserve the old works rather than raise new ones, and that the streets of Rome at last had rest from the heavy loads of the contractor's waggons. And this was true perhaps of the first years of his reign; it may have held good always of the wants of himself and of his family; but it seems a curious contrast to the words in which, after seeing Trajan's name inscribed on one after another of the national monuments which he had raised, Constantine compared it to the parasitic herb which grew as a thing of course on every wall. But in all this he was only following the imperial traditions, and the only trace of novelty therein was doing so much without putting fresh burdens on his people.

and baths, and theatres,

without fresh burdens of taxation.

Another form of outlay showed a more original conception, and the end and means in this case were both new. In the middle of the eighteenth century some peasants near Placentia (Piacenza) turned up with the plough a bronze tablet, which was no less than ten feet broad, six feet high, and 600 pounds in weight. It was soon broken into pieces, some of which were sold as old metal to be melted down for bells, but happily they caught the eyes of men who had scholarship enough to read the Latin words engraved on them. By their liberality and zeal the other fragments were bought up, and the whole when pieced together brought to light one of the longest classical inscriptions yet discovered, written in as many as 670 lines. It consists of mortgage deeds by which large sums were lent by the Emperor on landed property throughout some districts near Placentia. The names of the several farms and owners, and the various amounts, were specified in great detail, and the interest at five per cent. was to be paid over to a fund for the maintenance of poor boys and girls whose number and pensions were defined. Fragments of a like inscription have been found since then at Beneventum, and we have reason to believe that throughout Italy there were similar provisions for a measure which history speaks of in quite general terms.

The charitable endowments for poor children.

In this there are several things that call for notice. First as to the end proposed. In Rome itself there had been for two centuries a sort of poor law system, by which many thousands of the citizens had received their monthly dole of corn. No Emperor had been rash enough to repeal this law, though thoughtful statesmen mourned over the lazy able-bodied paupers crowded in the capital, and the discouragement to industry abroad.

The custom in old times had grown out of no tenderness of charity, but from the wish to keep the populace in good humour at the expense of the provincials who had to pay the cost, and in later times it was kept up from fear of the riots that might follow if the stream ceased to flow. But in all parts there were helpless orphans, or children of the destitute and disabled, to whom the world was hard and pitiless, and for whom real charity was needed. From these the actual government had nothing to hope, nothing to fear, and to care for these was to recognise a moral duty which had never been owned on a large scale by any ruler before Trajan. There was yet this further reason to make their claim more pressing, in that it rested with the father's will to expose or rear the new-born babe. Infanticide was sadly common as hope and industry declined, and good land was passing into desert from want of hands to till the soil. There was no fear then that the increase of population should outrun the means of living; but there was danger that the selfish or improvident should decline the cares of fatherhood, hurry out of life again those whom they had called into the world, or leave them to struggle at haphazard through the tender years of childhood. As to the end therefore we may say that tender-heartedness was shown in caring for the young and helpless, and also statesmanship in trying to rear more husbandmen to till the fields of Italy. The coins and monuments bring both of these aims before our eyes, sometimes portraying Trajan as raising from the ground women kneeling with their little ones, at other times referring to the methods by which he had provided for the eternity of his dear Italy.

The novelty and use of these.

Statesmanship shown in the form of the endowment.

As to means, again, we may note the measures taken to set on foot a lasting system. Payments from the treasury made by one ruler might have been withdrawn by his successor; personal caprice or the pressure of other needs might cause the funds to be withheld, and starve the charitable work. The endowment therefore took the form of loans made to the landowners throughout the country, and the interest was paid by them to a special Bounty Office, for which commissioners were named each year to collect and to dispense the sums accruing. There was also this advantage in the course, that the landed interest gained by the new capital employed upon the soil, while needful works, brought to a standstill for the want of funds, could be pushed forward with fresh vigour, to multiply the resources of the country.

Lastly, we may be curious to know something more of the results. The government had done so much that it might well have been expected that the work would be taken up by other hands, and that kindly charities of the same sort would spread fast among the wealthy. And some did copy the fashion set them from above. Pliny in his letters tells us how he had acted in like spirit, by saddling some estates with a rent charge which was always to be spent on the maintenance of poor boys and girls, and we may still read an inscription in which the town of Como gives him thanks for the kindly charity of his endowment. His beneficence dates probably in its earliest form from Nerva's reign, but others seemingly began to follow the example of their rulers, for the legal codes speak of it as a practice not uncommon; and each of the three Emperors who followed gave something to help on the cause, in the interest more often of the girls than of

Others act in a like spirit.

the boys, because perhaps they had been less cared for hitherto, and at their birth Roman fathers more often refused to bear the expense of rearing them.

But in the darker times that were presently in store, later rulers found the treasury bankrupt, and laid greedy hands upon the funds which for a century had helped so many through the years of helplessness, and all notice of them vanishes at last from history in the strife and turmoil of the ages of decline.

The beneficence of former rulers, we have seen, took the questionable form of monthly doles of corn to the populace of Rome. To fill the granaries and stock the markets of the capital they had the tribute paid in kind by the great corn-bearing provinces. They had bought up large quantities of grain and fixed an arbitrary scale of prices, had forbidden the export of produce to any but Italian ports, and had watched over Egypt with a jealous care as the storehouse of the empire, in which at first no Roman noble might even land without a passport. But Trajan had the breadth of view to begin a more enlightened policy. He trusted wholly to free trade to balance the supply and the demand, declined to fix a legal maximum for what he bought, and trusted the producers to bring the supplies in their own way to Rome. Egypt itself was suffering from a dearth because the Nile refused to rise; but happily elsewhere the failure of her stores was lightly felt, for, thanks to the freedom of the carrying trade, other rich countries stepped into her place, and after keeping the markets of Italy supplied, even fed Egypt with the surplus.

The policy of Trajan with regard to the corn trade.

Trajan's treatment of provincial interests showed the same large-minded policy. A curious light is thrown upon the subject by the letters written to him by Pliny

while governor of Bithynia, and these are still left for us to read, together with the Emperor's replies.

His treatment of provincial interests as shown in the correspondence with Pliny, A.D. 111.

First we may notice by their help how large a range of local freedom and self-government remained throughout the Roman empire. Though in that distant province there were few citizens of the highest class, and scarcely any municipia or colonies, yet the currents of free civic life flowed strongly. Popular assemblies, senates, and elected magistrates managed the affairs of every petty town; the richest men were proud to serve their countrymen in posts of honour, and to spend largely of their means in the interest of all. But these privileges, though in some few cases guaranteed by special treaty dating from the times of conquest, had commonly no legal safeguard to secure them; they lasted on by sufferance only, because the Roman governors had neither will nor leisure to rule all the details of social life around them. The latter had, however, large powers of interference, subject only to appeal to Rome; and if they were passionate or venal they abused their power to gratify caprice or greed, though often called to account for their misdeeds when their term of office had expired. Conscientious rulers were also tempted to meddle or dictate, sometimes from the strong man's instinctive grasp of power, sometimes from impatience of disorder and confusion, or from a love of symmetry and uniformity of system; and above all it seemed their duty to step in to prevent such waste or misuse of public funds as might burden future ages or dry the sources of the streams that fed the imperial treasury.

Municipal liberties existed on sufferance; provincial governors were often tempted to interfere with them,

Pliny was a talker and a student rather than a man

of action, and feeling the weight of power heavy, he leant upon the Emperor for support and guidance. Not content with referring to his judgment all grave questions, he often wrote on things of very little moment. "Prusa has an old and dirty bath; may not the town enlarge it on a scale more worthy of the credit of the city and the splendour of your reign?" "The aqueduct at Nicomedia is in ruins, though large sums have been wasted more than once upon the works. As they really are in want of water, would it not be well to see that they spend their money wisely, and use up the old materials as far as they will go, though for the rest bricks will be cheaper than hewn stone?" "The theatre and gymnasium at Nicæa have been very badly built, ought not an architect to be employed to see if they can be repaired without throwing good money after bad?" "Nicomedia would like to enlarge the area of its market-place, but an old, half-ruined temple of the Great Goddess stops the way. Might it not be transferred to a new site, as I can find nothing in the form of consecration to forbid it? Also there has been great havoc done by fire of late in the same city for the want of engines and the men to work them; would there be any danger in setting up a guild of firemen to meet like cases in the future, if all due care is taken against possible abuses?" On some of these points indeed the Emperor might wish to be consulted, as they had to do with the power of the purse. But he read with more impatience the requests that Pliny made to him to have architects and surveyors sent from Rome to carry out the works: he reminded him that such artists were no specialty of Italian growth, but were trained more easily in Greece and Asia. Still more emphatic is the language in which

as was Pliny, who refers even petty questions to the Emperor.

he rebuked his minister's ill-timed zeal, which would make light of the charters and traditions of the province. He tells him that it might be convenient, but would not be seemly, to force the town councillors, as he wished, to take up at interest on loan the public funds which were then lying idle; that the old privilege of Apamea to draw up its budget for itself without control must be respected, anomaly as it might seem. He has no wish, for the mere sake of symmetry, to set aside the variety of local usages as to the entrance fees paid on admission to the senates; and in general he repeats that he will have no wanton meddling with any rights based on real charters, or with any old-established customs.

Trajan would respect local usages, and not meddle needlessly,

As we read the letters, we admire the cautious self-restraint of Trajan in refusing to allow smooth systems of centralized machinery to take the place of the motley aggregate of local usages; but there are also to be noted some ominous tokens for the future. If the gentle Pliny while in office under Trajan was tempted to propose despotic measures, would not other ministers be likely to go further in that course, with more favour from their master? If the central government had such watchful care already for the revenues of every town, would it not in time of need help itself freely to the funds which it had husbanded so jealously?

or centralize too fast.

The answer to these questions would reveal in a later age two causes of the empire's slow decline, the paralysis of the local energy which was displaced by centralized bureaux, and the exhaustion of a society overburdened by taxation.

Great as were Trajan's merits in the arts of peace, the world knew him chiefly as a soldier, renewing after a

The world knew most of Trajan's military powers,

century of disuse the imperial traditions of the early Cæsars. The genius of Julius, the steady progress of the generals of Augustus, had carried the conquering arms of Rome into new lands, and pushed the frontiers forward till well-defined natural boundaries were reached. Since then there had been little effort to go onward, and save in the case of Britain, no conquest of importance had been made. The Emperors had kept their generals to the border camps, and had shown little taste for warlike enterprise; even those who, like Vespasian, had been trained as soldiers, found the round of official work task all their energies at Rome, or feared the risk of a long absence in a far-off province. Trajan had other views.

for, unlike earlier rulers, his policy was one of war.

It seemed to him perhaps that the machinery of central government was working smoothly and securely, while his own warlike qualities were rusting away for want of use. Policy might whisper that an empire won by force must be maintained by constant drill and timely energy, and that the spirit of the legions might grow faint if they were always cooped up in border camps in the dull routine of an inglorious service, while the neighbouring races of the north were showing daily a bolder and more threatening front.

On the side of Germany indeed there was for a while no pressing danger. The hostile tribes were weakened by their internecine struggles, and the "Germania" of Tacitus, which was written early in this reign, records in tones of cruel triumph the bloody feuds which had almost blotted from the book of nations the name of the once powerful Bructeri. But in the Roman ranks themselves there had been license and disorder, and Trajan seems to have been sent by Domitian to hold the chief

command upon the Rhine, as a general who could be trusted to tighten the bands of discipline and secure the wavering loyalty of the legions. One of their chiefs had lately risen in revolt against his master, and the mutiny, though soon put down, had left behind it a smouldering discontent and restlessness in the temper of the soldiers. The spirit of discipline had commonly declined at once when the highest posts were filled by weak and selfish generals, and it needed a strong and a resolute will to check the evils of misrule. He found work enough ready to his hand to last for years, and even the tidings of his great rise in life, and of the death of Nerva, did not tempt him for some time to leave his post of military duty.

On the side of Germany he had been content to strengthen the frontier with defensive works, and he did not care to return. A. D. 98.

He left some enduring traces of his organizing care in the towns and fortresses which he founded or restored, and in the great line of defence which he strengthened on the frontier. On the site of the old camp or fort (castra vetera) which was stormed by the Germans in the war of 67, he built the colony of Ulpia Trajana, the name of which reappears in the curious form of the "little Troy" in the early German poems, and helped to give currency to the old fancy that the Franks had come from Troy; while in a later age it changed to that of Xanten (urbs Sanctorum) as the supposed scene of the great massacre of Victor and his sainted followers by the Theban legion. Among the many scenes which he chose for colonies or castles, the most famous probably in later times was that of Aquæ (Baden-Baden) where many traces have been found of the legions which were serving under him, and of the soldiers who probably were often glad to take the waters there, like the invalids of later days. But the greatest works on

this side of the empire were carried on for the defence of the tithe grounds ("Agri decumates") between the Danube and the Rhine, to which colonists had been invited from all parts of Gaul with the offer of a free grant of lands, subject only to the payment of a tenth as rent-charge to the state. This corner was the weak place in the Roman border on the north, and as such needed special lines for its defence; Drusus and Tiberius had long ago begun to raise them, and they were now pushed on with energy, and continued by succeeding rulers. The "limes Romanorum" ran along for many a mile from one great river to the other, with wall and dyke and palisade, and forts at short intervals to protect the works. Remains of them are still left here and there, scarcely injured by the wreck of ages, and are called in the peasants' *patois* the "Devil's Wall" or "Heathens' Dyke," and many more fantastic names. Ages after Trajan some of the defences of this country still bore his name in history as well as local fancy, and witnessed to his energy in office; and modern travellers have fancied, though with little reason, that ruins found near Mainz belonged to a stone bridge built by him across the Rhine, on the same plan as the famous one upon the Danube.

His work in Germany was done so thoroughly before he left that he never needed to return. But on the Danube there was soon a pressing call for resolute action, and the Emperor answered it without delay. The people scattered on both sides of the lower Danube appear in history under many names, of which the most familiar are Thracians, Getæ, Dacians; but all seemingly were members of the same great race. They had come often into hostile contact with the powers of Greece and Rome, till at last, under Augustus, all the southern tribes were

But his presence seemed needed on the Danube.

brought into subjection, and their land, under the name of Mœsia, became a Roman province. Their kinsmen on the north retained their independence, and the Dacian peoples had been lately drawn together and welded into a formidable nation by the energy of Decebalus, their chieftain. Not content with organizing a powerful kingdom within the mountain chains of Transylvania, he had sallied from his natural fastness and crossed the Danube to spread havoc among the villages of Mœsia. Domitian had marched in person to the rescue, but found too late that he had neither the soldier's daring nor the general's skill, and was glad to purchase an inglorious peace by the rich presents that the Dacians looked upon as tribute. Artists also and mechanics were demanded to spread the arts of Roman culture in the north, for Decebalus was no mere barbarian of vulgar aim, but one who had the insight to see the advantages of civilized ways, and to meet his rivals with the weapons drawn from their own armoury. Emboldened by success he raised his terms, and took a threatening attitude upon the Danube, presuming on the weakness of the timid Domitian and the aged Nerva. But Trajan was in no mood to brook such insults, and when asked for the usual presents he haughtily replied that he at least had not been conquered; then hearing of fresh insults, and of intrigues with the neighbouring races, and even with the distant Parthians, he resolved on war, and set out himself to secure the safety and avenge the honour of the empire. With him went his young kinsman Hadrian as aide-de-camp (comes expeditionis Dacicæ), and the trusted Licinius Sura was always by his side in the campaign, while the ablest generals of the age were

The rise of the Dacian kingdom,

and threats of Decebalus.

Trajan declared war and set out. A.D. 101.

gathered on the scene of action to win fresh laurels in the war.

He had passed, it seems, unchanged through the luxurious life of Rome, and kept all the hardihood of his earlier habits. His old comrades saw him march bareheaded and on foot, taking his full share of danger and discomfort, joining in the mock fight which varied the sameness of the march, or ready to give and take hard blows without thought of personal dignity or safety. So retentive was his memory that he learnt, as it is said, the names and faces even of the common soldiers of the legions, could speak to them of their deeds of valour or of their honourable wounds, and make each feel that he was singled out for special notice. It was, they saw, no mere holiday campaign such as Emperors had sometimes come from Rome to witness, with its parade of unreal victories and idle triumphs, but the stern reality of war under a commander trained in life-long service, like the great generals of earlier days. Full of reliance in their leader, and in the high tone of discipline which he restored, they were eager to begin the strife and looked forward to success as sure.

For details of the war we must look to monuments more than to the ancient writers.

For details of the progress of the war we may look in vain to the histories of ancient writers. The chapters of Dion Cassius which treated of it have come down to us only in a meagre summary. Later epitomists compress into a page the whole story of the reign. Monumental evidence indeed gives more details. The bridges, fortresses, and road works of Trajan stamped themselves in local names upon the common language of the country, and left enduring traces which remain even to this day. We may track the course of the invading legions by the inscriptions graven by

THE BORDER LANDS
upon the
DANUBE
GERMANIA MAGNA
Marcomanni
Quadi
Limes Romanorum
Agri Decumates
Danubius Fl.
Regina
Augusta Vindelicorum
Brigantium L.
Brigantium
Abodiacum
Ovilava
Iuvavum
RHETIA
NORICUM
Veldidena
Aenus Fl.
Inn
Oenum
Alpes Noricae
Tridentum
Aquileia
Mare Adriaticum
Padus Fl.
Polae
ITALIA
Sabatia
Segestica
Sacus Fl.
Colapis
Genata
Siscia
Arrabona
Arrianis
Scarbantia
Mogentiana
Pelso L.
Iovia
Poetovio
Sopianae
Dautonia
Drava Fl.
PANNONIA
Iazyges Metanastae
Carpathus M.
Tibiscus Fl.
Marisia Fl.
DACIA
Napoca
Patavissa
Salinae
Hermopolis
Tapae
Sarmizegetusa
Ulpia Traiana
Sanctae
Bersovia
Trajan's Pass
Iron Gate
Trajane Bridge
Lederata
Tsierna
Tsierna Pass
Taurunum
Singidunum
Sirmium
Marsonia
Ulca
Arrubium
Bononia
Ratiaria
Variana
Securisca
Dimum Fl.
Dimum
Scedava
Pontus Euxinus
MOESIA SUPERIOR
Naissus
Atuas R.
Philippopolis
Haemus M.
Thracia
Carpathus M.
Tyras Fl.
Tyrum
Tyrum Romanum
Tyrtum Romanum
Danubius Fl.
Scardona
Salonae
Narona
Scodra L.
Scodra
Lissus
Epidaurus
Dyrrhachium
Via Egnatia
Via Militaris
Via Militaris Danubii
Via Militaris Dalmatiae
Via Militaris Pannoniae
Via Militaris Superior
Via Militaris Thraciae
Via Militaris Italiae
Via Militaris Galliae
Via Militaris Germaniae
Via Militaris Rhaetiae
Via Militaris Noricae
Via Militaris Illyrici
Via Militaris Moesiae
Via Militaris Daciae
Via Militaris Asiae
Via Militaris Africae
Via Militaris Hispaniae
Via Militaris Britanniae
Via Militaris Galatiae
Via Militaris Cappadociae
Via Militaris Syriae
Via Militaris Aegypti
Via Militaris Mesopotamiae
Via Militaris Persiae
Via Militaris Indiae
Via Militaris Scythiae
Via Militaris Sarmatiae
Via Militaris Germaniae Superioris
Via Militaris Germaniae Inferioris
Via Militaris Belgicae
Via Militaris Lugdunensis
Via Militaris Aquitaniae
Via Militaris Narbonensis
Via Militaris Alpium Cottiarum
Via Militaris Alpium Maritimarum
Via Militaris Alpium Graiarum
Via Militaris Alpium Poeninarum
Via Militaris Alpium Atrectianarum
Via Militaris Alpium Rhaeticarum
Via Militaris Alpium Noricarum
Via Militaris Alpium Iuliarum
Via Militaris Alpium Carnicarum
Via Militaris Alpium Dinaricarum
Via Militaris Alpium Pannonicarum
Via Militaris Alpium Transalpinarum
Via Militaris Alpium Cisalpinarum
Via Militaris Alpium Apuanarum
Via Militaris Alpium Ligusticarum
Via Militaris Alpium Maritimarum
Via Militaris Alpium Graiarum
Via Militaris Alpium Poeninarum
Via Militaris Alpium Atrectianarum
Via Militaris Alpium Rhaeticarum
Via Militaris Alpium Noricarum
Via Militaris Alpium Iuliarum
Via Militaris Alpium Carnicarum
Via Militaris Alpium Dinaricarum
Via Militaris Alpium Pannonicarum
Via Militaris Alpium Transalpinarum
Via Militaris Alpium Cisalpinarum
Via Militaris Alpium Apuanarum
Via Militaris Alpium Ligusticarum

pious fingers to the memory of the comrades who had fallen; and the cunning hands of artists have bodied forth to fancy in a thousand varied forms scene after scene in the progress of the conquering armies. But even with such help we can draw at best but the outline of the campaigns, and cannot hope for any definite precision. The forces that had made their way through Pannonia by different routes, were first assembled probably at Segestica (Sissek) on the Save, which Strabo speaks of as the natural starting point for a war in Dacia, and which had long before been strongly fortified for such a purpose. Here boats could be drawn together and sent down the stream for future use, while on the road along the river's banks, at which the legionaries of Tiberius had toiled already, new magazines and forts were formed to protect their communications in the rear, and letters carved upon the rocks near Ogradina tell us of the energy of Trajan's engineers. Moving steadily to the eastward they at last crossed the Danube at two points between Belgrade and Orsova, probably at Viminacium and Tierna, at each of which a bridge of boats was made where the stream was at its narrowest.

The course of the campaign.

With one half of the army the Emperor crossed in person, the other was left to the command of Lusius Quietus, a Moor, the most tried and trusty of his generals. The invaders were to move at first by separate roads, but to converge at the entrance of the single mountain pass which led to the stronghold of the Dacians. The enemy, meantime, had made no effort to molest them on their march, or to bar their way across the river.

Envoys came, indeed, as if to treat for peace; but it was remarked that they were men only of mean rank, who

A.D. 102. wore long hair and went bareheaded, and they were sent away unheeded. Forged despatches, too, were brought as if from neighbouring peoples to urge him to make peace and to be gone; but Trajan, suspecting treachery, was resolute and wary, and in the spring pushed steadily forward on his way. Ambassadors arrived once more, this time of the higher rank that gave the privilege of wearing hats upon their heads, like the Spanish grandees who by special grace might be covered in the presence of the king. Through them Decebalus, their master, sued for mercy, and offered to submit to any terms that the ministers of Trajan might impose. It was, however, only to gain time, for he would not meet the Roman envoys, but suddenly appeared in arms, and springing upon the legions on their march, closed with them at Tapæ in a desperate engagement. The combatants were fairly matched, and fought on with a desperate valour, for each knew that their sovereign was present in their ranks. The Dacians at length were routed, but the victory was dearly bought, for the battle-field was strewn with the dying and the dead; there was not even lint enough to dress the wounds, and the Emperor tore his own clothes to pieces to staunch the blood of the men who lay about him. The other army had been also waylaid upon its march, but beating its assailants back, it made its way to a junction with the rest.

The battle of Tapæ,

They had been moving hitherto since they left the Danube in what is now called the Austrian Banat, from which Transylvania, the centre of the old Dacian kingdom, is parted by a formidable barrier of mountains. One road alone passed through a narrow rift in the great chain, called the Iron

the advance into Transylvania,

Gate, either from the strength of the steep defiles or from the neighbouring mines. Through these the Romans had to pass, like the travellers of later days. A less determined leader might have shrunk from the hazardous enterprise before him ; but Trajan pushed resolutely on, seized the heights with his light troops, and by dint of hard fighting cleared a passage through the mountains.

Where the narrow valley widens out into the open country in the Hatszeger Thal, the camp may still be seen where the Romans lay for a while entrenched to rest after the hardships of the march before they joined battle with Decebalus once more. Sarmizegethusa (Vàrhely), the stronghold of the Dacian chieftain, was now threatened, and in its defence the nation made its last decisive stand. Once more, after hard fighting, they gave way, and resistance now seemed hopeless. The spirit of their king was broken, for his sister in a strongly guarded fort had fallen into the invader's power, and a last embassy of notables was sent, with their hands tied behind their backs, in token of entire submission. Hard terms of peace were offered and accepted. The Dacian was to raze his strongholds to the ground, to give up his conquests from the neighbouring peoples, and to send back the artists, mechanics, and drill sergeants who had been enticed across the border to teach the arts of peace and war. He consented even to send his deputies to beg the Roman senate to ratify the treaty now agreed on, and stooped so far as to come himself to Trajan's presence, to do homage to his conqueror.

and Roman victories

bring the first war to a close. A. D. 102.

The war had spread over two years already, and it was hazardous for the emperor to linger so far and so long away from Rome. But he could not well have

hoped that the struggle was quite ended. Decebalus had been humbled but not crushed; his own kingdom of Transylvania had not been overrun, and his people were brave and loyal still. He might fairly count on the alliance of his neighbours on the east, and even of the Parthians, who were brought together by their jealousy of Rome. Soon it was heard that he was stirring to avenge his recent losses. The dismantled fortresses were rebuilt and garrisoned afresh; lukewarm friends or deserters from his cause were made to feel his power, and all his skill in diplomacy was strained to organize a league of warlike nations, and dispose of their forces in the field. Then Trajan knew he must delay no longer if he would not see the work of years crumble into pieces; so after a breathing space of a few months he set out once more for the old scene of action, resolved to turn Dacia at last into a tributary province.

But the peace did not last long, and war broke out again.

He had first to meet treachery before open force was tried. Assassins were sent to take his life in Mœsia and when the murderous project failed, Longinus, the commander of a contingent, was decoyed under the plea of a conference with the Dacian chief, who seized and held him captive with the threat that he would only give him back alive if the legions were withdrawn and peace secured. The high-souled Roman had no wish to buy his safety with his country's loss; he would not even expose his sovereign to the cruel embarrassment of choice, but hastened to meet the inevitable death. It was left to Trajan to avenge him. His plan of the campaign was soon matured, and the needful preparations set on foot. Of these the greatest was the bridge across the Danube. Not content with

Trajan made great preparations and built a bridge of stone across the Danube.

having one or more of boats, such as was soon made in the last war, he resolved to build upon a grander scale a bridge of stone, or possibly to finish one which had been begun already in the course of the first war, that so he might be secured in his return against frost or a sudden blow. Dion Cassius, who as governor of Pannonia in later years could see so much of the work as time had spared, writes strongly in the expression of his wonder, and regards it as the greatest of the Emperor's creations. Each, he says, of the twenty piers on which the arches rested was 60 feet in breadth and 150 high, without taking count of the foundations. It was in ruins in his time; but the mighty piers were standing to show the greatness of Trajan's aims and the skill of his engineer Apollodorus. Between the Wallachian Turn-Severin near the town of Czernetz and the Servian Cladova, remains may still be seen of what was probably once the famous bridge. From this point along the right bank of the river runs an old Roman road which the Wallachs still call Trajan's highway, and passing through a mountain gorge it may be traced as far as Hermannstadt. Where it entered the Carpathians it was fortified by works of which the "Red Tower" gives its name to the whole pass, while "Trajan's Gate" is still standing in memory of his invading army. But the work was to be done thoroughly this time, and the enemy to be taken on all sides. The advancing legions tramped along every great road which from the south or west converged on the little Dacian kingdom that lay entrenched within its fence of mountains. Through the Iron Gates and the Volcan Pass and the gorge of the Red Tower they stormed the defences raised to bar their way, and after many a hard

The legions converged on Transylvania by various passes

A.D. 105.

struggle swept their enemies before them by the sheer weight of steady discipline, till at last they stood in the heart of the Dacian kingdom.

The league on which Decebalus had counted came to nothing: old adherents slunk away, and looked-for allies had stood aloof, so that he was left to fight on unaided to the bitter end. Tracked like a wild beast from lair to lair, he saw one after another of his castles wrested from him, and only when his chief stronghold could hold out no longer, did he close the struggle by a voluntary death.

and after obstinate fighting crushed the Dacian power. A.D. 106.

Many of his loyal followers were faithful to him to the last, and setting fire to their homes passed from hand to hand the poisoned cup, unwilling to survive the freedom of the country which they loved.

When the last city had been stormed, the treasures of the fallen Dacian, in spite of his precautions, passed into the victor's hands. In vain had he turned aside the stream Sargetia (Istrig) from its bed, and had a secret chamber for his hoards built in the dry channel by his prisoners of war. In vain had he, so ran the story, restored the current to its former bed, and butchered the captives when their work was done. One friend and confidant alone was left alive, but he was languishing in Roman bonds, and told the story to buy life or favour.

The war was over; the kingdom of Dacia had ceased to be, and it remained only to organize the conquest. No time was lost in completing and extending the great roads which led from the points where Trajan's bridges had been built. Strong works were raised for their defence as they entered the mountain passes, and fortresses to command their outlets from the highlands, while in the central spots on which the highways converged,

To complete the conquest the country was colonised and garrisoned,

new towns rose apace with Romanized names and charters of Italian rights. Many of the old inhabitants who had escaped the horrors of the war had left their ruined homesteads, and bidding farewell for ever to their country, had sought a shelter among the kindred races to the east; but their place was taken by the veterans, who were rewarded for their hardihood with pensions and with land, while yet further to make good the waste of life throughout the ravaged country, colonists came streaming at the Emperor's call from all the border provinces, which were still full of hardy peasants only lately brought within the range of Roman influence, but now ready in their turn to be the pioneers of civilized progress in the far-off Carpathian valleys. After them, or even with the armies, went the engineers, the architects, the artists of the older culture. Temples and baths, aqueducts and theatres rose speedily among the townships, and monuments of every kind are strewn over the land, so that few regions have had more to tell the antiquarian than this last corner in the Roman empire. Strange to say, even the ancestral faith of the conquered Dacians was lost to view, and while the inscriptions found among their ruins bear witness to the exotic rites of eastern deities which now took root among them, there are no tokens seemingly of the old national religion.

Nor are there wanting still more enduring traces of the conquest to show how thoroughly the work was done. Though soon exposed to the pressure of invading races in the gradual disruption of the Roman world, and torn away completely from the rest before two centuries had passed, though scourged and pillaged ruthlessly by the Goths and Huns, the Slavs and Mongols, who swept the land by turns and drove its

and the language of old Rome survives in the Wallachian or Roumanian to show how abiding was her influence.

people to their mountain homes, it still clung to the memory of Trajan, and gave his name to many a monument of force and greatness, while the language of old Rome planted by his colonists survived the rude shock of barbarous war and the slow process of decay, and as spoken by the mouths of the Roumans and the Wallachs of the Danube still proves its undoubted sisterhood with the French or the Italian of our day.

The monument of the Dacian victory in Trajan's forum. A.D. 112.

To commemorate the glory of successes which had given to the empire a province of 1,000 miles in circuit, a monument at Rome seemed needed on a scale of corresponding grandeur. To find room for it a space was cleared on the high ridge which ran between the Capitoline and the Quirinal hills. Within this space a new forum was laid out, and the skill of Apollodorus, the great designer of the age, was tasked to adorn it worthily. At the entrance rose the triumphal arch, of which some of the statuary and bas-reliefs may still be seen in the arch of Constantine, although disfigured by the tasteless additions of a latter age. Opposite was built the great basilica, one of the covered colonnades which served then for an exchange and law-court, and of which the name was borrowed from the portico at Athens, while the form lasted on to set the type of the early Christian churches. In the centre of the forum, as in the place of honour, was a statue of the Emperor on horseback. All around in every corner were statues and warlike emblems of the conquest, to which the later emperors added in their turn, till art sunk under Constantine too low to do more than spoil the ornaments which it borrowed. Close by was the great library, rich above all others in statute law and jurisprudence, and graced with the busts of all the undying dead in art and literature and science.

Far above all towered Trajan's famous column, the height of which, 128 feet in all, marked the quantity of earth which had been cleared away below the level of the hill in the place of which the forum stood. Twenty-three blocks of marble only are piled upon each other to make up the column's shaft, round which winds in spiral form the long series of sculptured groups, which give us at once a lively portraiture of the details of Roman warfare and all the special incidents of the Dacian campaigns. Though we have often little clue to time or place or actual circumstance, still we can follow from the scenes before us the invading army on the march, see them cross each river on their bridge of boats, force their way through rock and forest, storm and burn the strongholds of the enemy, and bring the spoils of war to grace the triumph of their leader. We can distinguish the trousered Dacians with their belted tunics, skirmishing outside their quarters, over which flies the national symbol of the dragon, while the stockades are decked with the ghastly skulls torn from their fallen enemies. Their ferocity is pictured to our fancy in the scene where the Roman corpses are mangled on their chariot wheels, or where their women gather round the captive legionary and hold the lighted torches to his limbs. We see them sue for pardon with their outstretched hands, or wend their way in sad procession from their homes, with wives and children, flocks and herds, turning their backs upon their devastated country, or when driven like wild beasts to bay, crowd round the poisoned goblet and roll in the agonies of death upon the ground.

and triumphal column. A.D. 113.

This monument, the crowning glory of the splendid forum, is left to us well-nigh unscathed by the ravages of time, save that the gilding and the colours have

Only the column is left of the scene on which Constantius looked with admiration. Ammian. Marcell. xvi. 10.

faded almost wholly from the sculpture, and that Trajan's statue which once took its stand by natural right upon the top has been replaced by that of the Apostle Paul. Little remains to us of all the rest, but we may judge somewhat of our loss by the terms in which an old historian describes the scene as it first met the eyes of the Emperor Constantius at his entry into Rome two centuries later. He gazed with wonder, we are told, at the historic glories of the ancient city, but when he came to Trajan's forum he stood speechless for awhile with admiration at a work which seemed to rise far above the power of words to paint or the art of later days to copy. In despair of doing anything so great as what he looked on, he said at last that he would rest content with having a horse made to match the one which carried Trajan. But Hormisdas, a Persian noble who was standing at his side, said, "It would be well to build the stable first, for your horse should be lodged as royally as the one which we admire."

The conquest of Arabia.

While the conquering eagles were thus borne over new lands in the far north, the frontier line was also carried forward on the south. Cornelius Palma, the regent of Syria marched over the sandy deserts of Arabia, which had never seen the arms of Rome since drought and pestilence beat back the soldiers of Augustus. The country of the Idumæan Petra was subdued, and imperial coins of this period pourtray Arabia in woman's form offering to Trajan incense and perfumes in token of submission, while the fame of these successes brought embassies to sue for peace from countries hitherto unknown.

A.D. 105 to 107.

The triumph that followed all these victories was one of extraordinary splendour and ferocity. For one hundred and twenty days the long round of bloody spectacles went on: wild beasts of every kind died by thousands in the circus, and the prisoners of war fenced with each other in their bloody sport till the idle populace was gratified and sated by the offering of some ten thousand lives.

And now for years Trajan and the world had peace, broken only perhaps by a short campaign against the Parthians, to which some questionable evidence of medals and church writers seems to point, although secular history is wholly silent on the subject.

There was enough indeed to occupy his thoughts meantime. The cares of office on so vast a scale, the oversight of so much ministerial work, the grandiose constructions in the capital and throughout Italy, the plans for usefulness and charity described already, formed labour enough for any single mind. There was no fear therefore that his powers should rust away from inaction in a time of peace. But there might possibly be dangers of another sort. To this period belong seemingly the rumours of traitorous designs and plots against his life, to which he gave indeed no open credence, but loftily professed his disregard, which may, however, have ruffled the calm even of his resolute nature, and sickened him of longer stay at Rome. For there was something feverish in the life of the great city; the air was charged with thunder clouds which might burst at any moment. Few of the rulers who had lived before him but had cause to fear the fickle passions of the populace or guards, or the jealousy of unscrupulous intriguers.

Once more therefore he resolved on war, in part perhaps from the feelings of disquietude at home, in part it may be from the overweening sense of absolute power,

and the restlessness of the great conqueror, spurred on by his ambition for more glory

War declared against Parthia. A.D. 173.

There was one rival only of historic name, the Parthian empire of the east, and with that it was not hard to pick a quarrel. Its sovereign Chosroes had lately claimed to treat Armenia, as a dependent fief, and had set a nephew of his own upon the throne, though the Romans had long looked upon it as a vassal kingdom, and Nero as a suzerain had set the crown upon its prince's head. No time was lost in resenting the affront, and instant war was threatened if the intruder did not withdraw his forces from Armenia, and leave the new-made monarch to his fate. The pretext was caught at the more gladly, as on this side only of the empire was the frontier line still undecided, and an organized power was left in arms to menace the boundaries of Rome.

Once more the note of preparation sounded for the war, the arsenals were all astir, and the tramp of the advancing legions was heard along the highways of the east. Before long the Emperor himself was on his way to take the field in person with his troops; but at Athens where he halted for a time, he was met by the ambassadors who came to sue for peace and offer presents, and beg him in their master's name to accept the homage of another kinsman in place of the one who had already forfeited the kingdom which was given him. For the Parthians were no longer in the heyday of their national vigour, as when they shattered the hosts of Crassus on the fatal field of Carrhæ, or swept almost without a check through western Asia and drove M. Antonius back from a fruitless and inglorious campaign. Three centuries ago they had made themselves a name in history by humbling the dynasty of Syria; the energy

PONTUS EUXINUS
ASIA MINOR
ARMENIA
Mons Caucasus
Oxus Fl.
MARE CASPIUM
Artaxata
Araxes Fl.
Euphrates Fl.
Mt. Niphates
Amida
MEDIA ATROPATENE
CILICIA
Edessa
Carrhæ
Nisibis
Osrhoene
Mesopotamia
Ninevehe
Hutra
Arbela
Gaugamela
Mons Zagros
Mons Cambunii
Rhagiana
Rhages
PARTHIA
Antioch
Seleucia
SYRIA
Orontes Fl.
Cyprus
MEDIA MAGNA
Ecbatana
Tigris Fl.
ASSYRIA
MESOPOTAMIA
Palmyra
Euphrates Fl.
Damascus
MARE MEDITERRANEUM
Seleucia
Ctesiphon
Babylon
Aspadana
Desertum
Susa
SUSIANA
CHALDEA
BABYLONIA
Jerusalem
Dead Sea
PALESTINE
Euphrates Fl.
Persepolis
PERSIS
Sinus Persicus
Map to illustrate
THE PARTHIAN WAR
of
TRAJAN
32
36
40
44
48
52
56
38
34
30
41
Russell & Struthers, N.Y.

of conquest had carried them from their highland homes and sent the thrones of Asia toppling down before them, till all from the Euphrates to the Oxus and Hydaspes owned their sway; but now the tide had spent its force and the great empire was slowly sinking to decay. Like the Turks of later days they had no genius to organize or to create, but were at best an aristocracy of warlike clans, lording it over subject peoples, full of their pride of race and barbarous disdain of all the arts of civilized progress, encamped awhile among the great historic cities of the past, but only to waste and to destroy. The currents of the national lifeblood now flowed feebly; the family feuds of the Arsacidæ, the ruling line, threatened to distract their forces, and they could scarcely make good with the sword their right to what the sword alone had won.

whose strength was then in its decay.

Trajan knew possibly something of their weakness, or expressed only the self-reliance of his own strong will, when he answered the envoys in a haughty strain, telling them that friends were secured by deeds and not by fair words, and that he would take such action as seemed good when he arrived upon the scene. From Athens he went forward on his way to the fortress of Seleucia, the key of Syria, proud of the memory of its famous siege, and of the gift of Roman freedom won by its stout defence against Tigranes. Thence he marched to the neighbouring Antioch, in whose crowded streets the social currents of the East and West were blended, the city where the name of Christian was first heard, but where also the cypress groves of Daphne were the haunts of infamous debauchery in religion's name. Thither came ambassadors to ask for peace; the satraps

Trajan arrives at Antioch, Jan. A.D. 114.

and petty chieftains met him on his way, and swore fealty to their lord and master.

He passed on to the Euphrates, and no one appeared in arms to bar his road. The new Arsacid in Armenia, so lately seated on the throne, had sent already more than once to Trajan. But his first letter was written in lofty style as to a brother king, and was therefore left without an answer; the second struck a lower note, and offered to do homage through the governor of a neighbouring province. Even this the Emperor scarcely deigned to notice, would not even for a time displace the official from his post, but merely sent the governor's son to bear this answer.

and marches through Armenia,

Before long the legions in their march had crossed the confines of Armenia; the towns by which they passed were occupied without a blow, and the princely Parthamasiris was summoned to his master's presence in the heart of a country that was lately all his own. There on a lofty seat sat Trajan on the earth-works raised for the entrenchments of the camp, while the legions stood around as on parade. The prince bowed low before the throne, and laid his diadem before the Emperor's feet, then waited silently in hope to see it replaced with graceful courtesy upon his head. But he hoped and waited all in vain; the soldiers who stood near raised a shout of triumph at his act of self-abasement, and startled at the din he turned as if in act to fly, but only to find himself girt in by armed battalions, from whom escape seemed hopeless. Regaining self-control he begged to be received in private interview; but baffled of his hopes, he turned at last with anger and despair to quit the camp. Before he had gone far he was recalled, brought once more before the throne, and bidden to

whose king Parthamasiris, came to the camp to do homage;

make his suit in the hearing of the legions. Then at last the chieftain's pride took fire, and he gave his indignation vent. He came, he said, not as a conquered foeman or an humble vassal, but of his free choice to court the majesty of Rome. He had laid his crown down as a token of respect, but looked to have his kingdom given him again, as to Tiridates in like case from Nero's hands. The Emperor's reply was stern and brief. Armenia was to be henceforth a Roman province, and its line of kings was closed; but for the rest the ex-monarch and his followers might go safely where they pleased. But the Armenian prince was too high-spirited to yield without a struggle; he flew to arms, it seems, and was slain soon after at a word from Trajan, who had not generosity enough to spare the rival whom he had humbled.

but was deposed, and slain when he attempted to resist.

C. Fronto, Princ. Hist.

Then a panic spread through all the courts of Asia. From far-off regions, little known before, came humble offers of submission to the invader who was so masterful and stern; and wary intriguers, who had kept away before, found to their dismay that they could not longer play upon him with ambiguous words. The distant chiefs indeed were allowed to hold their own, but in all the country between the two great rivers in the track of the advancing army, the native princes were deposed and Roman governors took their place.

General terror and submission in the neighbouring princes,

Meantime the postal service had been organized with special care. On the great roads that led to Rome carriages and relays of horses conveyed the couriers with their state despatches; and the great city traced from week to week the course of the campaign through scenes beyond the range of their experience or fancy, listening

with a lively wonder to the lengthening tale of bloodless conquests. The Senate vainly tried to find a list of fitting honours for their prince; they voted the solemn services and days of thanksgiving, and called him Parthicus as they had styled him Dacius after the last war, but above all other titles of their choice he prided himself the most on that of Optimus (the Best), linked as it was in popular fancy with the name of Jupiter, mightiest of the gods of Rome, and pointing as he seemed to think more to the graces of his character than to the glories of his arms.

and triumph at Rome.

But the gladness of the general triumph, both at home and at the seat of war, was rudely broken by the tidings of a great disaster. While the soldiers were resting from their labours in their winter quarters, an earthquake of appalling force shook many of the towns of Asia, and marked its power at Antioch by features of especial horror. The fair city was at all times a teeming hive of population; merchants and mariners of every land were crowded in its port on the Orontes; art and luxury and learning drew the votaries of fashion to the great Broadway of Epiphanes which ran its level course four miles in length, with spacious colonnades on either side. But at this time especially the Emperor's presence brought a more than usual concourse thither. Soldiers and courtiers, litigants and senators, sightseers and traders jostled each other in the streets and mingled the languages of East and West. The more fatal therefore was the sudden blow which carried sorrow and bereavement to men's homes in every land. We need not dwell upon the too familiar features of all the great earthquakes that we hear of. Here, too, we read of the

But the great earthquake at Antioch spread ruin and dismay among Trajan's staff. Dec. 13, A.D. 115. J. Malalas.

mysterious rumblings underground, of the heaving and the rocking earth, of the houses crashing into ruins and burying their inmates in the wreck, of the few survivors disinterred at last from what might have been their tomb. It adds little to the genuine horrors of the scene to be told in the fanciful language of a later writer of the babe found sucking at the breast of the mother who was cold and dead, or of the unknown visitor of unearthly stature who beckoned the Emperor from the place of danger to the open ground within the circus, where he stayed for days till the earthquake passed away.

But the thoughts of the soldiers were soon called away from these memories of gloom and desolation. In early spring once more the Emperor took the field with overwhelming forces. It was no easy task, indeed, to cross the rapid current of the Tigris in the face of an enemy drawn up in arms upon the bank, and in a country where no timber grew for rafts. But through the winter months the highland forests had been felled far up the river; shipbuilders had been busy with their work, and boats were brought in pieces to the water's edge, where they were joined together and floated down the stream to the point chosen for the passage. Then the flotillas suddenly appeared in swarms before the eyes of the startled natives, and manned by overpowering numbers, pushed rapidly across the river, and dislodged the thin lines that stood to bar the way. The Parthians, struck with panic at their resolute advance or distracted by civil feuds, were swept away before them, and scarcely fronted them again that year to strike a blow for independence.

He took the field again, crossed the Tigris A.D. 116,

carried all before him,

Onward the legions tramped in steady progress, but their march was a triumphal pageant. They neared the

ruins of Nineveh, capital of the Assyria of ancient story; passed by the battle-field of Arbela, where the phalanx of Alexander routed the multitudinous hosts of Persia: at Babylon they saw the wonders done of old by the builders and engineers of early despots. Ctesiphon, with the winter palace of the Parthian king, fell into their hands, with the neighbouring Seleucia, that still retained the semblance of a shadowy republic, though a royal fortress towered above it. Not content with sweeping all before them in Assyria, they pushed onward yet to Susa, the old residence of Persian monarchs. The daughter of the Parthian king became a captive; his throne of beaten gold was sent as a trophy to the Roman Senate, which heard the exciting tidings that one after another the great cities of historic fame had passed under the Emperor's sway, who was following in the steps of Alexander and pining for more worlds to conquer. Indeed, old as he was, he seemed possessed with the daring of adventurous youth. Taking ship, we read, on the Euphrates, he let the current bear him to its mouth, and there upon the shores of ocean saw the merchant-boats set sail for India, the land of fable and romance, and dreamed of enterprises still to come in countries where the Roman eagles were unknown.

and pushed on as far as the Persian Gulf.

But his career of triumph was now closed, and the few months of life which still were left to him were clouded with the gloom of failure and disaster. While he was roaming as a knight-errant in quest of adventures far away, the conquered countries were in arms once more. The cities of Assyria rose against his garrisons as soon as the spell of his name and presence was removed; Arabia and Edessa flung off their allegiance;

But the lately conquered countries rose in his rear,

and the Jews of Cyrenaica, Egypt and Cyprus sprung in blind fury at their Roman masters, as if to avenge the cruelties practised long ago in Palestine by Titus. This fierce explosion of fanatic zeal from a people girt about by alien races was hopeless, of course, and sternly repressed with fire and sword. To secure his hold on Parthia the Emperor set up a puppet-king, and crowned him with great parade at Ctesiphon, but could not give him the right to claim or the force to secure the loyalty of an unwilling nation. His generals marched with dubious success against the cities that had risen in revolt, while he took field himself against a petty power of the south, whose only strength lay in the desert in which it was entrenched. He displayed in the campaign all his old hardihood and valour, and led more than once his horsemen to the charge; but heat and drought and sickness baffled all his efforts, and drove him back at last with tarnished fame and ruined health.

and he failed to regain his hold upon them before his failing strength warned him to retire.

Once more he talked of marching to chastise the rebels in Chaldea, but his strength was failing fast, and it was time to leave the scenes where he had won so much of fruitless glory, and swept all before him like a passing storm. He set his face towards Italy upon his homeward way; but the long journey was too much for his enfeebled frame, and he sank down at Selinus in Cilicia, after nearly twenty years of monarchy and more than sixty of a stirring life.

So died the strongest and the justest of the imperial rulers whom Rome had seen as yet. Only in the last war can we see the traces of the despot's arrogance and vainglory. The Dacian campaigns might well seem needful to secure a

He died at Selinus, August 117.

frontier and chastise an insolent aggressor; and to the soldier's eye, perhaps, there was a danger that, after a century of peace, the Roman empire might settle on its lees, and lose its energy and self-respect. At home, in the routine of civil government he was wary and vigilant and self-restrained, rising as ruler and as judge above the suspicion of personal bias and caprice, promptly curbing the wrong-doer and checking the officious zeal of his own ministers. He was natural and unaffected in the gentle courtesies of common life, cared little for the outer forms of rank, and was easy of access to the meanest of his people.

His character.

Dion Cassius, who never fails to insist upon the darker side of every character which he describes, says that he was lascivious in feeling, and given to habits of hard drinking, but owns that he can find no record of any wrong or harm done by him in such moods. The refined Pliny paints for us a different picture of the social life in which he took a part. Coming fresh from the meetings of the privy council held for some days in the Emperor's villa, he tells us how he spent the time at court. The fare, it seems, was somewhat simple; there was no costly show of entertainments; but public readings amused the guests, and literary discussions followed with pleasant converse far into the night.

Ep. vi. 31.

Through the great monuments which were called after his name, Trajan stood to the fancy of the middle ages as a personal symbol of the force and grandeur of old Rome; but art and poetry brought him forward also as the favourite type of heathen justice. A scene in the sculptures of his forum represented him as starting for the wars, while a woman was bending low

His great works of art affected powerfully the imagination of later ages.

with piteous gesture at his feet. Out of this a legend grew that a poor widow came to him to ask for vengeance on the soldiers who had killed her son. "When I come back I will listen to your suit," the Emperor said. "And who will right me if you die?" was the reply. "My successor." "Your successor; yes, but his act will not profit you, and it were better surely to do the good yourself and to deserve the recompense that will follow." Trajan's heart, so ran the story, was touched by the widow's earnest plea; he waited patiently to hear her case, and would not leave till she had justice done her. Such is the form the legend takes in the poetry of Dante, and it is with this meaning that the scene was pictured to the fancy in many a work of later art, such as that which we still may see at Venice in one of the capitals of the Doge's palace.

Taken as a type of heathen justice in legend and art.

Purg. x.

It was a favourite addition to the story that Gregory the Great was so moved with sympathy when it was told him that he prayed for the soul of the old pagan, who, having not the law, was yet a law unto himself. That very night he saw a vision in his sleep, and heard that, in answer to his prayer, the soul of Trajan had winged its flight to join the spirits of the blest.

CHAPTER III.

HADRIAN, A. D. 117–138.

From the story of the frank and earnest Trajan, we turn with a strange sense of contrast to the life and character of his successor, one of the most versatile and paradoxical of men. Of the career of P. Ælius Hadrianus, little is known to us for

The earlier life of Hadrian.

the forty years before he gained the throne, and the meagre tale may be soon told.

Born himself at Rome, he came of a family which drew its name from Hadria in Northern Italy, but had been settled for centuries in Spain. Losing his father at an early age, he came under the care of Trajan, his near kinsman, and after a few years, in which he made such rapid progress in his studies as to be called "the little Greekling," he took to hunting with such passion as to need a check, and was therefore put at once into the army, and taken by his guardian to the wars. The news of Nerva's death found him in Upper Germany at a distance from his kinsman, and he was the first to carry to him the tidings of his accession to the empire, outstripping, though on foot, the courier sent by his sister's husband Servianus, who had contrived to make his carriage break down upon the way.

The same relative tried also to make mischief by calling Trajan's notice to the debts and youthful follies of his ward; but Hadrian still had influence at court, and stood high in the good graces of Plotina, married by her help the Emperor's grand-niece, and had a legion given him to command in the second Dacian war. In this, as afterwards in Pannonia and Parthia, his gallantry and powers of discipline were spoken of with marked approval; powerful friends began to rally round him at the court, and to think of him and act for him as a possible successor to the throne. But no decisive word was uttered to encourage friends or to alarm his rivals, and all up to the last were in suspense, till he heard suddenly in Syria, where Trajan had left him in command, first, that the emperor had named him as his heir, and then a few days afterwards that the post of monarchy

His sudden elevation to the throne caused ugly rumours.

was vacant. So sudden was the act as to give rise to ugly rumours. Plotina, it was whispered, who loved him fondly if not wisely, had tampered for his sake with her dying husband's will, had even kept his death a secret for a time, and written with her own hand the letters to the Senate which named Hadrian his heir. But in what we read elsewhere about Plotina she appears as a type of womanly dignity and honour, and the story serves best perhaps to illustrate the licence of court scandal which absolute monarchy so often fosters.

The first acts of the new sovereign were temperate and wary. His letters to the Senate were full of filial respect for Trajan and regard for constitutional usage. He excused himself because the soldiers in their haste had hailed him Emperor without waiting for their sanction, asked for divine honours for the departed ruler, whose remains he went to look upon with dutiful affection, and sent to be enshrined within the famous column in the forum. Declining the triumph for himself, he had Trajan's likeness borne in state along the streets in the pageant that was to do honour to his exploits. But for all that, Hadrian was in no mood to follow in his steps, had no wish to copy his love of war or his imperial ambition. On every frontier hostile races were in arms; in far-off Britain as well as in the East, among the Moors of Africa and among the bold races of the north there were rumours of invasion or revolt. There was no lack of opportunities, nor, indeed, of armies trained to conquest; but he was not to be tempted with the hope of military laurels, and his constant policy was one of peace. He withdrew at once the weak pretender forced upon the Parthians by the arms of Rome, and left all the lands beyond the Tigris where no western colonists had any

His moderation and policy of peace

claims upon his care. It was far otherwise in Dacia, in which peaceful settlers had found a home for years, and strongholds had been garrisoned for their defence. It would seem therefore most unlikely that he thought of drawing back his troops from the strong mountain barrier of Transylvania, and of leaving the new province to its fate. Later writers, reflecting possibly the discontent of Trajan's generals, said indeed that he was minded to do this, and that he had actually begun to break the bridge across the Danube; but the facts remain, that the language and the arts of Rome steadily gained ground upon that northern border, and that Hadrian surrendered nothing which was worth retaining. For the rest, in other parts of the great empire, he was content to restore order, and waged no offensive warfare.

was accompanied by personal hardihood and strict regard for discipline.

Yet, strange to say, not only had he personal hardihood and valour, and was ready on the march to face the heat and labours of the day like the meanest soldier in the ranks, but he always with watchful care maintained his armies in a state of vigour and efficiency that seldom had been rivalled. He swept away with an unsparing hand the abuses of the past, and insisted on the austere discipline of ancient days, putting down with peremptory sternness the luxurious arrangements of the camp, which even in Germany endangered the soldier's manliness and self-control, and still more in Syria, where the wanton Antioch, hot-bed of licence as it was, spread far around it the contagion of its dissolute and unruly temper. In the spirit of the generals of olden time he walked bareheaded alike through Alpine snows and in the scorching heats of Africa, setting them thus a pattern of robust endurance. In every land through which he passed he inspected

carefully the forts, encampments, arsenals, and stores, and seemed to have lodged in his capacious memory the story of each legion, and the names even of the rank and file.

In the centre of Algeria we may still trace the ramparts of a camp where an auxiliary force was stationed to defend the border and to be the pioneers of civilized progress. On a column which was raised in the centre of the camp was posted in monumental characters a proclamation of the Emperor to the soldiers of this distant outpost, in which he dwells upon their laborious energy and loyal zeal.

The inscription in the camp in Lambæsis.

Thus trained and organized, his armies were formidable weapons for the hand of an enterprising leader; but he used them wholly for repression or defence, and never with aggressive aims. Even in Britain, where the peaceful south was harassed by the incursions of the wilder tribes, in place of any war of conquest a great wall, a triple line of earthworks strengthened by a high wall of solid masonry, was carried for many a mile across the country, to be a barrier to the northern savagery; and fragments of the work may yet be seen between Newcastle and Carlisle to show how earnestly defence was sought by the ruler who built on such a scale.

But it was no love of personal ease that clipped the wings of his ambition. Instead of staying quietly at Rome to take his pleasure, he was always on the move, and every province witnessed in its turn the restless activity of his imperial care. The coins struck in his honour as he went to and fro upon his journeys, the stately monuments and public works which were called into being by

He travelled constantly through the provinces.

him as he passed along, these are evidence enough, when the meagre accounts of our historians fail to tell us, of the wide range of his long-continued wanderings and of the benefits which followed in his train.

The empire had long claimed to govern in the interests of the provinces, and not of Rome alone, and here at last was an Emperor who seemed resolved to see with his own eyes all his people's wants, to spend with liberal bounty for the common good, to reform impartially the abuses of old times, and lay the heavy rod of his displeasure upon all his weak or faithless servants. To the largeness of such aims there corresponded a breadth and manysidedness of character and powers; and few living men were better fitted to enter with fresh interest into the varied life of all the lands through which he travelled. Had he not been emperor he might have been a sort of "admirable Crichton." He had thrown himself with eager curiosity into all the art and learning of his age, and his vast memory enabled him to take all knowledge for his own. Poet, geometer, musician, orator, and artist, he had studied all the graces and accomplishments of liberal culture, knew something of the history and genius of every people, could estimate their literary or artistic skill, and admire the achievements of the past.

showing in all a breadth of view and largeness of sympathy almost unique.

But he was far from travelling merely as an antiquarian or art critic, for he left in every land enduring traces of his present care. The bridges, aqueducts, and theatres were repaired, fresh public works were undertaken, municipal accounts were overhauled, the governors' official acts reviewed, and every department of the public service thoroughly sifted and controlled. The imperial treasury was seen to gather in its stores in the

interest of the provinces at large, and not for a few dissolute favourites at court or for the idle populace of Rome. To symbolize in striking forms his impartial care for all his subjects, he was ready to accept local offices of every kind, and discharge by deputy the magisterial functions in the district towns under every variety of national title.

In the movements of the imperial tourist there was little luxury or ostentation. He walked or rode in military guise before his guard, with his head uncovered in all weather, ready to share without a murmur the legionary's humble fare, and to bear all the heat and labour of the day. History gives us few details as to the exact course and order of his wanderings, but inscriptions upon bronze and stone abound with the tokens of his energy in every land, and of the thankfulness with which each province hailed the presence of its ruler.

In Britain, which had seen no emperor since Claudius, he came to inspect the menaced frontier, and to plan the long lines of defence against the free races of the north. In Africa we find him soothing the disquiet caused of late by the panic fears of Jewish massacres and Roman vengeance. His diplomacy and liberal courtesies dispel the clouds of war that gather on the lines of the Euphrates and are serious enough to require his presence on the scene. On the plains of Troy we hear of him gazing around him in the spirit of a pilgrim, and solemnly burying the gigantic relics in which his reverent fancy saw the bones of Ajax. The great towns of western Asia are proud to let their Emperor see their wealth, their industry, their teeming populations; they have to thank him for many a public monument of note, and record upon their coinage

We hear of him in Britain,

Africa,

Asia Minor,

in many a varying phrase and symbol his justice, liberality, and guardian care.

But it was in Athens that he tarried longest, or hither he came most frequently to find repose as in his favourite home. Here in the centre of the old Hellenic art, he put off awhile the soldier and the prince, and soothed himself with the amenities of liberal culture. He tried to fancy himself back in the Greek life of palmier days; he presided at the public games, sat by to witness the feats of literary skill, raised the theatres and temples from their ruins, and asked to be admitted to the venerable mysteries of their national faith. To the Athens of old days he added a new quarter, to be called henceforth Hadrian's city; he gave it a new code of laws to rival those of Dracon and of Solon, and recalled some shadowy memories of its days of sovereign power by making it mistress of the isle of Kephallonia. It had already academic fame, and drew its scholars from all lands; its public professorships had given a recognised status to its studies; fresh endowments were bestowed upon its chairs with a liberal hand, and nothing was spared for the encouragement of learning.

and in Athens more than all,

where he liberally endowed art and learning,

The lecturers on rhetoric and philosophy, the so-called sophists, basked in the sunshine of imperial favour, had immunities and bounties showered upon them, and were raised at times to offices of state and high command. One of them was intrusted with a princely fortune to beautify the city which he honoured with his learned presence. Another found his professional income large enough to feed his fellow citizens in time of famine. A third, the writer Arrian, was taken from his Stoic mu-

honouring there and elsewhere the professors of science.

sings to fill the place of general and governor of Cappadocia, one of the largest of the provinces of Rome. There in his turn he followed the example set him in high quarters, started from Trapezus (Trebizond) upon a journey of discovery round the coasts of the Black Sea, visited the seats of the old colonial enterprises of Miletus, studied with a careful eye the extent of trade and the facilities for intercourse in prosperous regions not yet ruined by the incursions of barbarian hordes. The explorer's journey ended, he wrote a valuable memoir to his master; which is of interest as gathering up all that geography had learned upon the subject.

There was yet another ancient land which had manifold attractions for the tourist. It was seemingly in later life that Hadrian tarried long in Egypt, to explore the wonders of its art and study the genius of its people. He looked no doubt with curious eye upon the pyramids, the sphinxes, and the giant piles of Carnac, and the rude lines may still be read upon the face of Memnon's vocal statue which tell us of the visit of his wife Sabina. His curious fancy found enough to stir it in the secrets of the mystic lore which had been handed down from bygone ages, in the strange medley of the wisdom and the folly which crossed each other in the national thought, in their strong hold on the belief in an unseen world and the moral government of Providence, in the animal worship which had plunged of late a whole neighbourhood into deadly feud about the conflicting claims of cat and ibis, and made rival towns dispute in arms their right to feed in their midst the sacred bull called Apis for the adoration of the rest. He could not but admire the great museum of the Ptolemies, the magnificent seat of art and litera-

Hadrian in Egypt.

ture and science, the home for centuries of so much academic wit and learning.

In that land of many wonders the people of Alexandria were not the least. In a letter to his brother-in-law which still remains we may see the mocking insight with which the emperor studied the changing moods of the great city, full, as it seemed to him, of soothsayers, astrologers, and quacks, of worshippers of Christ and votaries of Serapis, passing in their fickleness from extreme of loyalty to that of licence, so industrious by instinct as to tolerate no idle lounger in their midst, and yet withal so turbulent as to be incapable of governing themselves, professing reverence for many a rival deity, yet all alike paying their court to Mammon.

Hist. Aug. Vopisci Saturn 8.

But even as he scoffed at the fanciful extravagance of Egypt, he was unmanned by the spell of her distempered thought. As he travelled on the Nile, we read, he was busy with magic arts which called for a human victim. One of his train, a Bithynian shepherd of rare beauty, was ready to devote himself, and died to give a moment's pleasure to his master. Another story tells us only that he fell into the river, and died an involuntary death. But both agree in this at least, that Hadrian loved him fondly, mourned him deeply, and would not be comforted when he was gone. He could not bring him back to life, but he could honour him as no sovereign had honoured man before. The district where he died must bear his name, and a city grow on the spot where he was buried. If the old nomes of Egypt had their tutelary beasts which they worshipped as divine, the Antinoite might claim like rank for the new hero who had given it a name, might build temples to his memory,

The death and apotheosis of Antinous.

consult his will in oracles, and task the arts of Greece to lodge him worthily. Soon the new religion spread beyond those narrow bounds. City after city of the Greek and Eastern world caught the fever of this servile adoration, built altars and temples to Antinous founded festivals to do him honour, and dressed him up to modern fancy in the attributes and likeness of their ancient gods. The sculptor's art lent itself with little scruple to the spreading flattery of the fashion, reproduced him under countless forms as its favourite type of beauty, while poets laureate sung his praises, and provincial mints put his face and name upon their medals.

We may see the tokens at this time of an influence rather cosmopolitan than Roman. By his visible concern for the well-being of the provinces, by his long-continued wanderings in every land, by his Hellenic sympathies and tastes, Hadrian lessened certainly the attractive force of the old imperial city, and dealt a blow at her ascendancy over men's minds. Not indeed that he treated her with any marked neglect. The round of shows and largesses went on as usual: the public granaries were filled, the circus was supplied with costly victims, and the proud paupers of the streets had little cause to grumble. The old religions of home growth were guarded by the state with watchful care, and screened from the dangerous rivalry of the deeper sentiment or more exciting rituals of the East. In her streets he himself wore the toga, the citizen's traditional dress of state, required the senators to do the like, and so revived for a time decaying custom. But the provinces began to feel themselves more nearly on a level with the central city. Every year the doors of citizenship seemed to open wider as one after another of the

Hadrian's interests cosmopolitan more than Roman.

As the provinces gained in self-respect, the ascendancy of Rome and of her language grew feebler.

towns was raised by special grace to the Latin or the Roman status. Each Emperor had done his part towards the diffusion of the rights which had been the privilege of the capital in olden time; and Hadrian made them feel that he was ruling in the interests of all without distinction, since he spent his life in wandering through their midst, and met their wants with liberal and impartial hand. They looked therefore less and less to Rome to set the tone and guide the fashions. The great towns of Alexandria and Antioch, the thriving marts of Asia Minor, were separate centres of influence and commerce; and Greece, meanwhile, spectral and decayed as were her ancient cities, resumed her intellectual sway over men's minds, students of all lands flocked to her university of culture, and the tongue which her poets, philosophers, and orators had spoken became henceforth without a rival the literary language of the world. The speech of Cicero and Vergil gradually lost its purity and power; scholars disdained to pen their thoughts in it: taste and fashion seemed to shun it, and scarcely a great name is added after this to the roll of its writers of renown.

In the sphere of law and justice another levelling influence had been at work which was carried further at this time. The civil law of Rome, with its old traditional usages and forms, had long been seen by statesmen to need expansion in a liberal spirit before the courts could fairly deal with the suits of aliens, or with new cases wholly undefined. The prætors had for many years put out a statement of the principles by which they would be guided in dealing with the questions where the statute law would fail them or press hardly on the suitors, and

The levelling influence of the "perpetual edict."

many of these rules and forms, though at first binding only for the year, had gradually crystallised into a system of equity, which passed commonly from hand to hand, though somewhat loose and ill-defined, and with much room for individual judgment and caprice. It was a gain to progress when Salvius Julianus, an eminent jurist of the day, sifted and harmonized these floating principles and forms of justice, giving them a systematic shape under the name of Hadrian's "perpetual edict." It was a great step towards the imperial codes of later days, in which the currents of world-wide experience and Greek philosophy were mingled with the stream of purely Roman thought. The Emperor was the sole legislator of the realm; the statutes were the expression of his personal will; but the great jurists who advised him in the council chamber came from countries far away, and reflected in many various forms the universal sense of justice.

So far we have seen only the strength of Hadrian's character. To organize and drill the armies in a period of almost unbroken peace, and give a tone to discipline which lasted on long after he was gone, to study by personal intercourse the problems of government in every land, dealing with all races on the same broad level of impartial justice, to combine the rigid machinery and iron force of Roman rule with the finer graces of Hellenic culture, this was a policy which, borrowed as it was perhaps from the old traditions of Augustus, yet could be carried out only by an intellect of most unusual flexibility and force. For the work which was to be done upon so vast a scale he had only limited resources; he dealt with it in a spirit which was at once liberal and thrifty, thus following in the steps of the wisest emperors who had gone

Hadrian's frugality and good finance.

before him. In the first year of his reign he had remitted the arrears due to the treasury to the amount of 900 million sesterces, burning the bonds in Trajan's forum as a public offering to his memory. The charities lately set on foot for the rearing of poor children were endowed by him with further bounties. We may still read the medals struck in honour of his largesses of money to the populace of Rome, repeated on seven distinct occasions. Prompt succour was given with a kindly hand to the sufferers by fire and plague and earthquake in all parts of the widespread empire. But to meet such calls upon his purse, and to maintain the armies and the civil service, he felt the need of frugal ways and good finance. He revised the imperial budget with the skill of a trained accountant, held the details in his retentive memory, and would have no waste or peculation. Economy was the order of his household; no greedy favourites or freedmen grew fat and wanton at the treasury's expense; the purveyors of his table even found that they must be careful, for at his dinners of state he sent sometimes to taste the dishes which were served to the humblest of his guests.

But great as were Hadrian's talents, and consistent in the main as was his policy as ruler, we are yet told of many a pettiness and strange caprice. If we try to study his real character it seems, like the legendary Proteus, to take every form by turns, to pass from the brightest to the darkest moods by some inexplicable fantasy. One of the first things we read of him on his rise to power is his speech to an old enemy, "Now you are safe," as if he could stoop no longer to the meanness of a personal quarrel. He will not listen to the advice of a trusty friend to sweep out

But Hadrian's great qualities were said to be balanced by dark moods and strange caprices.

of his path three men who might be dangerous rivals; but shortly afterwards Rome heard with horror that the most eminent of Trajan's generals, Cornelius Palma, the conqueror of Arabia, and Lusius Quietus, perhaps the ablest soldier of his day, with other men of special mark, had been suddenly struck down unheard, without any forms of legal trial, on the plea of traitorous plots against the Emperor's life. Resenting probably as a personal affront the surrender of the conquests which they had helped to win for Trajan, and despising the scholar prince whose great qualities were as yet unknown, they had made common cause, as it was said, with malcontents at Rome, and joined in a wide-spread conspiracy. Hadrian indeed was in Dacia at the time, and soon came back in haste, and with good reason, seemingly, threw upon the prætorian præfect and the Senate the burden of the dark deed that had been done, promising that henceforth no senator should be condemned except by the sentence of his peers. He kept his word till his reason lost its balance. But years afterwards the instinct of cruelty broke out in fearful earnest. When old age and sickness pressed him hard, and the reins of power were slipping from his hands, his fears of treachery proved fatal to his nearest intimates and kinsmen, to those who had secured his rise to empire, or had shown their loyalty by the service of a life-time.

His suspicious temper,

As we read the story in the poor chroniclers of a later age the description of his personal habits is full of striking inconsistencies. He lived with the citizens of Rome as with his peers, and moved to and fro with little state; yet he was the first Emperor to employ the services of knights for the menial offices of the palace filled hitherto by freedmen. He would hear no more of the

charges of high treason so terrible in years gone by, he would have the courts of law to act without respect of persons; but he organized a system of espionage of a new and searching kind, and read the familiar correspondence of his friends, twitting them even, now and then, with the reproaches of their wives meant only for the husbands' ears. He loved art and literature sincerely, he liked to be surrounded with the men who studied them in earnest, but they thought at least that he took umbrage easily at any fancied rivalry, and was full of jealousy and unworthy spite.

system of espionage,

It was dangerous to be too brilliant where the Emperor wished to shine, and there were few departments of the fine arts in which he did not find himself at home. The scholar Favorinus once was asked why he had given way so easily in a dispute upon a point of grammar when he was in the right, and he answered with good reason, "It is not a prudent thing to call in question the learning of the master of thirty legions." The professors of repute who moved his envy found their pupils taken from them, or rival lecturers started to irritate and supplant them. Apollodorus, the great architect, was even more unlucky. Long ago in Trajan's company he had listened with impatience to the future Emperor's critical remarks, and had told him to paint pumpkins and not to meddle with design. Years afterwards, when Hadrian sent him his own plans for the temple of Aphrodite which he wished to build, it was returned with the offensive comment that the statue of the goddess was made upon so large a scale that she could not stand upright in her own house. The critic paid with his life, we read, the penalty for his sharp words.

and jealousy of brilliant powers,

as in the case of Apollodorus.

Even the glory of the immortal dead stirred the jealousy of the artist prince, and he affected to prefer Cato to Cicero, Ennius to Vergil, the obscure Antimachus to Homer. He was said to be jealous of the fame of Trajan and therefore to attribute to his most secret counsels the most unpopular of his own measures; by way of indirectly blaming him, he would not have his own name put upon any of the public buildings which he raised, while yet he was ready to allow some twenty cities to take their title from him.

His fickleness,

It was a marked feature of his policy to be on good terms with the chieftains of the border races, and to win their good-will with ample presents, a dangerous precedent perhaps for the tribute paid to barbarians by later rulers; but after receiving one of them at Rome with special honour, he treated with contempt the robes of state presented to him by his illustrious guest, dressing up in like attire 300 criminals whom he sent to fight as gladiators in the circus.

superstition,

He was courteous and kindly to his friends, granting them readily the boons they asked; yet he listened with open ears to scandalous stories to their hurt, and few even of the most favoured escaped at last without disgrace. Shrewd and hardheaded as he was, he believed in necromancy, magic, and astrology, and after making much of keeping up the purity of the old national faith, he allowed the flattery of his people to canonize Antinous, the minion who won his love in later years. In fine, says one of the oldest writers of his life, after reckoning up his fickle moods and varied graces, "he was everything by turns; earnest and light-hearted, courteous and stern, bountiful and thrifty, frank and dissembling, wary and wanton"—a very chameleon with changing colours. It seemed as if he

and paradoxical variety of temper.

gathered up in his paradoxical and many-sided nature all the fair qualities and gross defects which singly characterised each of the earlier rulers. Yet we have grave reasons for mistrusting the accounts which reach us from such questionable sources as the poor biographies and epitomes of a much later age, which often betray a fatal want of judgment while they reflect the credulous malevolence of rumour.

Reasons for mistrusting these accounts of ancient authors.

Rome had no tender feeling for a ruler who seemed more at home in learned Athens, or in the camp among the soldiers, than in the old capital of fashion and of power. The idle nobles doubtless were well pleased to repeat and colour the ill-natured stories which floated in the air, and in the literary circles gathered round the prince there were sensitive and jealous spirits ready to resent a hasty word and think their merits unacknowledged, or to point a venomed epigram against the Emperor's sorry taste. Hadrian was a master in the fence of words, and could hit hard in repartees, as when a tippling poet wrote of him in jesting strain, "I should not like to be a Cæsar, roaming through the wilds of Britain, suffering from Scythian frosts," he answered in the same metre, "I should not like to be a Florus, wandering among the taverns and keeping pothouse company." He may well have shown impatience at petty vanities and literary quarrels, or have amused himself at their expense with scant regard for ruffled pride; but if we pass from words to facts few definite charges can be brought against his dignity or justice as a prince. An enlightened patron of the arts, he fostered learning with a liberal bounty, advanced to posts of trust the scholars whose talents he had noticed, and knew how to turn their powers to practical account, as when Salvius Julia-

nus began, probably by his direction, to compile a code of equity, or when he prompted Arrian to compose his "Tactics" and explore the line of border forts upon the Euxine, or when he bade Apollodorus to write his treatise on artillery (Poliorketica), the opening words of which, though written in exile, betray no personal resentment as of one suffering from a wanton wrong. With that exception, if it really was one, there is no clear case of harshness or of cruelty to stain his memory until his reason failed in the frenzy of his dying agony. To set against such rumours and suspicions we have proofs enough, in monumental evidence and in the works which lived on after he was gone, of the greatness of the sovereign, who left abiding tokens of his energy strewn through all the lands of the vast empire, who kept his legions in good humour though busy with unceasing drill, who stamped his influence for centuries upon the forms of military service, drew vast lines of fortresses and walls round undefended frontiers, reorganized departments of the civil service, and withal found leisure enough and width of intellectual sympathies to appreciate and foster all the higher culture of the age.

His villa at Tivoli.

We may find perhaps a sort of symbol of his wide range of tastes in the arrangements of the villa and the gardens which he planned for himself in his old age at Tibur (Tivoli). No longer able with his failing strength to roam over the world, he thought of gathering in his own surroundings a sort of pictorial history of the genius of each race and the national monuments of every land. Artists travelled at his bidding, and plied their tools, and reproduced in marble and in bronze the memories of a lifetime and the works of all the ages. A great museum was laid out under the open sky, bounded by a ring fence of some ten miles

in circuit; within it the old historic names were heard again, but in strange fellowship, as the most diverse periods of art and thought joined hands as it were to suit the Emperor's fancy. The parks and avenues were peopled with statues which seemed to have just left the hands of Phidias or Polycletus or many an artist of renown.

There was the Academy linked in memory for ever to the name of Plato: there the Lyceum where his scholar and his rival lectured, and the Porch which gave its name to the doctors of the Stoic creed, and the Prytaneum or Guildhall, the centre of the civic life of Athens. Not far away were imaged forth in mimic forms the cool retreats of Tempe, while the waters of a neighbouring valley bore the votaries along to what seemed the temple of Serapis at Canopus. Not content with the solid realities of earth, he found room also for the shadowy forms of the unseen world. The scenes of Hades were pourtrayed as borrowed from the poet's fancy, or as represented in dramatic shapes in the Eleusinian mysteries. In the settings of these pictures a large eclectic taste gave itself free liberty of choice. The arts of Greece, of Egypt, and of Asia yielded up their stores at the bidding of a connoisseur who saw an interest or a beauty in them all.

The famous gardens are now a wilderness of ruins, full of weird suggestions of the past, over which a teeming nature has flung her luxuriant festoons to deck the fairy land of fancy; but they have served for centuries as a mine which the curious might explore, and the art galleries of Europe owe many of their bronzes, marbles, and mosaics to the industry and skill once summoned to adorn Hadrian's panorama of the history of civilized progress. Among these the various statues of Antinous

are of most interest, partly as they show the methods of ideal treatment then in vogue, and the amount of creative power which still remained, but partly also as the symptoms of the infatuation of a prince who could find no worthier subjects for the artists of his day than the sensuous beauty of a Bithynian shepherd.

At this time indeed his finest faculties of mind were failing, and his death was drawing nigh. He was seized by a painful and hopeless malady, and it was time to think of choosing his successor. But at first he could not bear the thought of anyone preparing to step into his place, and his jealousy was fatal to the men who were pointed out by natural claims or by the people's favour. After a time he singled out a certain Œlius Verus, who had showy accomplishments, a graceful carriage, and an air of culture and refinement. But he was thought to be a sensual, selfish trifler, with little trace of the manly hardihood of Hadrian in his best days; and few eyes, save the Emperor's, could see his merits. The world was spared the chances of a possible Nero in the future; the Emperor himself soon found, to use his own words, "that he was leaning on a tottering wall," and that the great sums spent in donatives to the soldiers upon the adoption of the new-made Cæsar were a pure loss to his treasury. The young man's health was failing rapidly; he had not even strength to make his complimentary speech before the Senate, and the dose which he took to stimulate his nerves was too potent for his feeble system, and hurried the weakling to the grave before he had time to mount the throne.

Struck by disease he chose, for his successor, Verus, A. D. 135.

who died soon after, A. D. 138,

Once more the old embarrassment of choice recurred, but this time with a happier issue. By a lucky accident

and T. A. Antoninus was adopted in his place.

one day, we read, the Emperor's eye fell on Titus Aurelius Antoninus as he came into the senate house supporting the weakness of his aged father-in-law with his strong arm. He had passed with unstained honour through the round of the offices of state, had taken rank in the council chamber of the prince, where his voice was always raised in the interest of mercy. All knew his worth, and gladly hailed the choice when the Emperor's mantle fell upon his shoulders; the formal act of adoption once completed, they could wait now with lighter hearts till the last scenes of Hadrian's life were over.

Hadrian's dying agony and fitful moods of cruelty.

The Prince's sun was setting fast in lurid cloud. Disease was tightening its hold upon him, and bringing with it a lingering agony of torment, in which his strong reason wholly lost its balance, and gave way to the fitful moods of a delirious frenzy. Now he was a prey to wild suspicions, and was haunted by a mania for bloodshed; now he tried to obtain relief by magic arts and incantations; and at last in his supreme despair he resolved to die. But his physician would not give him the fatal potion which he called for; his servants shrank in terror from the thought of dealing the blow which would rid him of his pains, and stole out of his grasp the dagger which he tried to use. In vain he begged them to cut short his sufferings in mercy. The filial piety of Antoninus watched over his bedside and stayed his hand when it was raised to strike himself, as he had already hid from his sight the objects of his murderous suspicions. But the memory of Servianus, whom he had slain but lately, haunted in nightmare shapes the conscience of the stricken sufferer with the words which the victim uttered at the last:—"I am to die though in-

nocent; may the gods give to Hadrian the wish to die, without the power." He had also lucid intervals when his thoughts were busy upon the world unknown beyond the grave, and the scenes that were pictured for him in the gardens of his favoured home of Tivoli. Even on his deathbed he could feel the poet's love for tuneful phrase, and the verses are still left to us which were addressed by him to his soul, which, pale and cold and naked, would soon have to make its way to regions all unknown, with none of its whilom gaiety:—

Animula, vagula, blandula,
Hospes comesque corporis,
Quæ nunc abibis in loca,
Pallidula, rigida, nudula,
Nec ut soles dabis jocos.

His death at Baiæ,

The end came at last at Baiæ. The body was not brought in state to Rome, for the capital had long been weary of its ruler. It forgot the justice of his earlier years and the breadth of his imperial aims, and could not shake off the sense of terror of his moribund cruelty and frenzy. The senators were minded even to proscribe his memory and annul his acts, and to refuse him the divine honours which had been given with such an easy grace to men of far less worth. They yielded with reluctance to the prayers of Antoninus, and dropped an official veil over the memories of the last few months, influenced partly by their joy at finding that the victims whom they had mourned were living still, but far more out of respect for the present Emperor than the past. Was it popular caprice or a higher tone of public feeling, owing to which, Rome, which had borne with Caligula and regretted Nero, could not par-

and canonization.

don the last morbid excesses of a ruler who for one-and-twenty years had given the world the blessings of security and justice?

Though Hadrian cared little for state parade in life, he wished to be lodged royally in death. The mausoleum of Augustus was already full; he resolved therefore to build a worthy resting-place for himself and for the Cæsars yet to come. A stately bridge across the Tiber, in the neighbourhood of the Campus Martius, decked with a row of statues on each side, was made to serve as a road of state to lead to the great tower in which his ashes were to lie. Above the tower stood out to view the groups of statuary whose beauty moved the wonder of the travellers of later days; within was a sepulchral chamber, in a niche of which was stored the urn which contained all that the flames had left of Hadrian. The tower was built of masonry almost as solid as the giant piles of Egypt, and with the bridge it has outlived the wreck of ages. For almost a century it served only to enshrine the dust of Emperors, but afterwards it was used for other ends, and became a fortress, a papal residence, a prison. When the Goths were storming Rome, the tide of war rolled up against the mausoleum, and when all else failed the statues which adorned it were torn from their pedestals by the besieged, and flung down upon their enemies below. Some few were found, long centuries after, almost unhurt among the ruins, and may be still seen in the great galleries of Europe. The works of art have disappeared with the gates of bronze and with the lining of rich marble which covered it within, and after ages have done little to it save to replace the triumphal statue of the builder with the figure of the Archangel Michael, whom a Pope saw in his vision

The mausoleum of Hadrian.

sheathing his sword in token that the plague was stayed above the old tower that has since been called the castle of St. Angelo.

The policy of Hadrian was one of peace; through all his wide dominions a generation had grown up which scarcely knew the crash of war. One race only, the Jewish, would not rest, but rose again in fierce revolt. The hopes of the nation had seemingly been crushed forever by the harsh hand of Titus; the generals of Trajan pitilessly stifled its vindictive passion that had burst out afresh in Africa and Cyprus. It had seen in Palestine the iron force of Roman discipline, and the outcasts in every land had learned how enormous was the empire and how irresistible its power. Yet, strange to say, they flung themselves once more in blind fury on their masters, and refused to despair or to submit. They could not bear to think that colonists were planted among the ruins of their Holy City; that heathen temples should be built in spots so full to them of sacred memories, or that the old sound of Jerusalem should be displaced in favour of the motley combination of Ælia Capitolina, to which both the Emperor and the chief god of Rome lent each their quota. They nursed their wrath till Hadrian's back was turned, and the bulk of the legions far away; then at last the fire blazed out again, and wrapped all Palestine in flames. A would-be-Messiah showed himself among them, taking the title of Barchochebas, after the star whose rising they had waited for so long. The multitudes flocked eagerly around his banner, and Akiba, the great rabbi, lent him the sanction of his venerated name. The patriot armies needed weapons, but the Jewish smiths had bungled purposely in working for the Roman soldiers, that the cast-off arms might be left upon their

The outbreak in Palestine, A. D. 132.

hands. The dismantled fortresses were speedily rebuilt, the walls which Titus ruined rose afresh, and secret passages and galleries were constructed under the strongholds that the garrisons might find ingress and egress as they pleased. They would not meet the legions in the field, but tried to distract their energy by multitudinous warfare. The revolt, despised at first, soon grew to such a height as to call for the best general of the empire and all the discipline of her armies. Julius Severus was brought from distant Britain to drive the fanatics to bay and to crush them with his overwhelming forces. One stronghold after another fell, though stubbornly defended, till the fiercest of the zealots intrenched themselves in their despair at Bether, and yielded only to the last extremities of famine. The war was closed after untold misery and bloodshed, and even the official bulletins avowed in their ominous change of style how great was the loss of Roman life.

was at last terribly stamped out.

All that had been left of the Holy City of the Jews was swept away, and local memories were quite effaced. New settlers took the place of the old people; statues of the Emperor marked the site where the old Temple stood; and the spots dear to Christian pilgrims were befouled and hid away from sight by a building raised in honour of mere carnal passion. The Jews might never wander more in the old city of their fathers. Once only in the year were they allowed, on the anniversary of the destruction of their temple, to stand awhile within the holy precincts and kiss a fragment of the venerable ruin, and mourn over the hopeless desolation of their land. Even this privilege, says Jerome, they dearly bought, for a price was set by their masters on their tears, as they had set their price of old upon the blood of Jesus.

CHAPTER IV.

ANTONINUS PIUS. A. D. 138–161.

THE ancient writer who tells us most of Antoninus twice compares him with the legendary Numa whose reign appears in the romance of early Roman history as the golden age of peace and equity, when men lived nearest in communion with heaven. As in that dreamland of olden fancy the outlines are all faint and indistinct from want of stirring adventure or excitement, so now it might seem as if the happiness of the world were too complete to let it care either to make history or to write it. For the new sovereign was no Trajan, happiest when on the march and proud of his prowess in the field; he was not brilliant and versatile like Hadrian, bent on exploring every land in person and exhausting all the experience of his age. His life as Emperor was passionless and uneventful, and history, wearied of unbroken eulogy, has soon dropped her curtain upon the government of a prince who shunned parade and high ambition, and was content to secure the welfare of his people.

The reign of Antoninus was uneventful.

To describe him, the popular fancy chose the name of Pius, as Vergil called the hero of his epic, though not perhaps with the same shade of meaning. The Romans meant by piety the scrupulous conscience and the loving heart which are careless of no claims upon them, and leave no task of duty unfulfilled. They used it for the reverence for the unseen world and the mystic fervour of devotion; but oftener far for the quiet unobtrusive virtues of bro-

Why called Pius.

ther, child, or friend. In the case of Antoninus other reasons were not wanting to justify the title, but above all, it seemed a fitting name for the tenderness with which he watched over Hadrian's bed of sickness, refusing to let him cut short his pains and his despair, or stain his memory with the blood of guiltless victims; and when death came at last to the sufferer's relief, he would not rest till he wrung from the unwilling Senate the vote which raised the departed Emperor to the rank of godhead. But he had spent the same loving care, it seems, already on many of his kinsmen, had given loans on easy terms to friends and neighbours, and showed to all a gentle courtesy which never failed. A character so kindly could not look with unconcern upon the endowments for poor children which Trajan's charity had founded. He enlarged their number, and called the girls whom he reared at his expense, after the name of his own wife, Faustina.

His charity was tender,

But there was no weakness, no extravagance in this good nature. His household servants, the officials of the court, who had counted perhaps on his indulgence, found to their surprise that his favour was no royal road to wealth. There was no golden harvest to be reaped from fees and perquisites and bribes in the service of a master who had a word and ear for all who came to see him, but made no special favourites, and had a perfect horror of rich sinecures as a cruel tax upon the endurance of his people. Nor did he, like earlier monarchs, use his patronage to win the loyalty of more adherents. The offices of state in the old days of the republic had passed rapidly from hand to hand, to satisfy the ambition of the ruling classes; the first Emperors gave the consulship for a few

yet free from weakness.

months only to please men's vanity with the unsubstantial honour, and rarely kept provincial governors long at the same post. But Antoninus had no love of change; he retained in office the ministers whom Hadrian had named, and seldom displaced the men who had proved their capacity to rule. In this he had chiefly the public interest in view, for he called his agents sharply to account if they were grasping or oppressive; he tried to lighten the burden of taxation, and would not even travel abroad for fear that the calls of hospitality towards his train might be burdensome to the lands through which it passed. Yet though the provincials never saw him in their midst, they felt the tokens of his watchful care. He was ready to grant an audience to every deputation; his ear was open to all the cries for succour or redress; he seemed quite familiar with the ways and means of all the country towns, and with the chief expenses which they had to meet. Had any grave disaster from fire or earthquake scourged their neighbourhood, the Emperor was prompt with words of condolence and acts of grace. He was not ostentatious in his bounty, for he knew that to give freely to the favoured he must take largely from the rest; and in the imperial budget of those times there was no wide margin for his personal pleasures. In earlier days, indeed, he had readily received the family estates bequeathed to him by the kinsmen who had prized his dutiful affection, but now he would take no legacy save from the childless, and discouraged the morbid whim of those who used his name to gratify some spleen against their natural heirs. The eagerness of fiscal agents and informers died away, and the dreaded name of treason was seldom, if ever, heard.

He did not travel abroad, but was careful of provincial interests,

and economical,

It is natural to read that far and wide the provinces were prosperous and contented with a prince who ruled them quietly and firmly, who had no hankering after military laurels, but liked to say with Scipio that he would rather save a single fellow-countryman than slay a thousand of the enemy. Yet his reign was not one of unbroken peace, like that of fabled Numa. The Moors and the Britons and the untamed races of the Rhine and Danube tasked the skill and patience of his generals, and the Jews even, hopelessly crushed as they had seemed to be, flung themselves once more with ineffectual fury on the legions. But in the main the influence of Rome was spread by wise diplomacy rather than with the sword. The neighbouring potentates saw Hadrian's machinery of war standing in strong and burnished trim upon their borders, and had no mind to try its force, while the gentle courtesies of Antoninus came with a better grace from one who could wield, if need be, such thunderbolts of battle. So kings and chieftains sought his friendship. Some came to Rome from the far East to do him honour. Others at a word or sign stopped short in the career of their ambition, appealed to him to be umpire in their quarrels, or renounced the aims which threatened to cross his will. For in the interests of the empire he would not part with the reality of power, though he cared little for the show of glory; he grasped the substance, but despised the shadow.

though wars were needful.

Moorish and Dacian war probably A.D. 139.

War with Brigantes, A.D. 140-145.

He gained more by diplomacy.

This is well-nigh all we read about the ruler. It is time to turn to the pictures of the man, in the quiet of the home circle and in the simplicity of rural life. His family on the father's side had long resided at Nemausus

(Nismes), in the Romanised Provincia (Provence), but he chose for his favourite resort in time of leisure his country seat at Lorium in Etruria. There he had passed the happy years of childhood; and though often called away to the dignities of office in which father and ancestors had gone before him, he had gladly returned thither as often as he could lay aside his cares. There, too, as Emperor, he retired from the business and bustle of the city, put off awhile the purple robe of state, and dressed himself in the simple homespun of his native village. In that retreat no tedious ceremonies disturbed his peace, no weariness of early greetings, no long debates in privy council or in judgment hall; but in their stead were the homely interest of the farm and vintage, varied only by a rustic merry-making or the pleasures of the chase. It was such a life as Curius or Cato lived of old, before the country was deserted for the towns, or slave-labour on the large estates took the place of native yeomen, though the rude austerity of ancient manners was tempered by a genial refinement which was no natural growth upon the soil of Italy. In the memoirs of his adopted son, who was one day to succeed him, we find a pleasant picture of the surroundings of the prince, of the easy tone and unaffected gaiety of the intercourse in his home circle, where all the etiquette of courts was laid aside, and every neighbour found a hearty welcome.

His homely life at Lorium,

The Emperor stood little on his dignity, and could waive easily enough the claims of rank, could take in good part a friendly jest, or even at times a rude retort. In the house of an acquaintance he was one day looking at some porphyry columns which he fancied, and asking where his host had bought them, but was unceremoniously told

and easy temper,

that under a friend's roof a guest should know how to be both deaf and dumb in season. Such airs disturbed him little, at times served only to amuse him, as when Apollonius came from Colchis to teach philosophy to the young Marcus at the invitation of the prince, but declined to call upon him when he came to Rome, saying that the pupil should wait upon the master, not the master on the pupil. Antoninus only laughed at his pretentiousness, and said that it was easier seemingly to come all the way from Colchis than to walk across the street at Rome. Long before, when he was governor of Asia, and had visited Smyrna in the course of a judicial circuit, he was quartered by the magistrates in the mansion of the sophist Polemon, who was away upon a journey at the time. At the dead of night the master of the house came home, and knocked with impatience at the doors, and would not be pacified till he had the place entirely to himself, and had closed the doors upon his unbidden guest. The great man took the insult quietly enough, and when, years afterwards, the sophist came to Rome to show off his powers of eloquence, the Emperor welcomed him to court without any show of rancour at the past, only telling his own servants to be careful not to turn the door upon him when he called. And when an actor came with a complaint that Polemon, as stage director, had dismissed him without warning from a company of players, he only asked what time it was when he was so abruptly turned away. "Midday!" was the complainant's answer. "He thrust me out at midnight!" said the prince, "and I lodged no appeal!"

which readily forgave a slight.

It was the charm and merit of his character that he was so natural in all he said and did, and disliked conventional and affected manners. His young heir was

warm and tender-hearted, and would not be comforted when he had lost his tutor. The servants of the court, quite shocked at what seemed an outburst of such vulgar grief, urged him to consult his dignity and curb his feelings, but the Emperor silenced them and said: "Let the tears flow; neither philosophy nor rank need stifle the affections of the heart." Happily, he was himself rewarded by the tenderness which he respected in its love for others. He had adopted his nephew long ago by Hadrian's wish, had married him to his own daughter, and watched his career with anxious care. The character thus formed under his eye was dutiful and loyal to the last. For many a year the young man was near him always, night and day storing in his memory lessons of statecraft and experience, taking in his pliant temper the impression of the stronger will, and preparing to receive the burdens of state upon his shoulder when the old man was forced to lay them down.

His tender care of his adopted son,

At length the time was come, and Antoninus felt that the end was near. He had only strength to say a few last words, to commend the empire and his daughter to the care of his successor, to bid his servants move into the chamber of his son the golden statuette of Fortune which had stood always near his bed, and to give the watch-word for the last time to the officer on guard, before he passed away after three-and-twenty years of rule. The word he chose was "Equanimity," and it may serve as a fitting symbol for the calm and balanced temper, which was gentle yet firm, and homely yet with perfect dignity. History has dealt kindly with the good old man, for it has let his faults fall quite into the shade, till they have passed away from memory, and we know him only as

to whom he left the empire at his death, A.D. 161.

the unselfish ruler, who was rich at his accession, but told his wife that when he took the empire he must give up all besides, who preferred to repair the monuments of others rather than to build new ones of his own, and, prince as he was, recurred fondly in his medals to the memories of the old republic. No great deeds are told of him, save this perhaps the greatest, that he secured the love and happiness of those he ruled.

CHAPTER V.

MARCUS AURELIUS ANTONINUS. A.D. 147–180.

PLATO had written long ago that there could be no perfect government on earth till philosophy was seated on the throne. The fancy was to be realised at last in the person of the second of the Antonines, for the whole civilized world was in the hands of one who in the search for truth had sat at the feet of all the sages of his day, and left no source of ancient wisdom unexplored. M. Annius Verus, for such was the name he bore at first, came of a family which had long been settled in the south of Spain, and thence summoned to the capital to fill the highest offices of state. Left fatherless in infancy, he had been tenderly cared for by his grandfather, and early caught the fancy of the Emperor Hadrian, who, because of the frank candour of his childish ways called him playfully Verissimus, a name which he liked well enough in later years to have it put even at times upon the coins struck in his mints. At the early age of eight he was promoted to a place among the Salii, the priests of Mars, recruited commonly from the oldest of the patrician families at Rome.

The early life of M. Aurelius.

With them he learned to make the stated round in public through the city with the shields which fell of yore from heaven, to join in the old dances and the venerable litany, to which, among much that had almost lost its meaning to their ears, new lines were added now and then, in honour of the rulers lately deified. When they flung their flowers together on the statue of the god, his was the only garland which lighted on the sacred head, and young as he was he took the lead of all the rest, and knew by heart all the hymns to be recited. He grew apace in the sunshine of court favour, and no pains were spared at home meantime to fit him for high station, for the greatest of the teachers of his day took part in his instruction.

His correspondence with Fronto, his old tutor.

Of these Fronto was one of the most famous. By a lucky accident, not many years ago, the letters which passed between him and his young pupil were found in an old manuscript, over the fading characters of which another work had been written at a later date, in accordance with a custom which has saved for us many a pious homily at the expense of classic lore. There is much of pedantry and affectation in the style, and professor of rhetoric as Fronto was, he could not teach his young charge how to write with dignity or grace. Yet if we look below the poor conceits of form and stilted diction, we shall find the gush of warm affections welling up to give beauty to the boyish letters. There is a genuine ring about the endearing epithets which he lavishes upon his teacher, and a trustfulness with which he counts upon his sympathy in all his passing interests. He writes to him of course about his studies, how he is learning Greek and hopes one day to rival the most eloquent Hellenic authors, how he is so hard at work as to have

made extracts in the course of a few days from sixty books at least, but playfully relieves his fears by telling him that some of the books were very short. And then among passages of pretentious criticism, which make us fear that he is growing a conceited book-worm, come others of a lighter vein, which show that he has not lost his natural love of youthful pranks. One day he writes in glee to say how he frightened some shepherds on the road where he was riding, who took him and his friends for highway robbers, for, seeing how suspiciously they eyed him, he charged at full speed upon the flock, and only scampered off again when they stood on their defence and began to bandy blows with crook and staff.

His conversion from rhetoric to philosophy.

But happily the lad had other masters who taught him something better than the quibbles and subtleties of rhetoric. Philosophy found him an apt pupil at a tender age, and he soon caught up with eagerness, and pushed even to excess, the lessons of hardihood and self-control. He tried to put his principles to the test of practice, to live simply in the midst of luxury and licence, to content himself with frugal fare, and to take the bare ground for his bed at night. At last it needed all his mother's gentle influence to curb the enthusiasm of his ascetic humour.

The old professor whom he loved so well began to be jealous of such rival influence, and begged him not to forsake the Muses for austerer guides, who cared little for the graces of fine language, but seemed to think it vain and worldly to dress well or write a decent style. It was indeed no petty jealousy of a narrow heart, for the old man thought sincerely that rhetoric was the queen of all the sciences and arts, and longed to see her seated on the throne. He wished to see his pupil famous, and could think of no

The jealousy of Fronto.

opportunities so good as the one which imperial eloquence would have before it. To lecture his subjects on the duty of man, to award the meed of praise or blame, to animate to high endeavours in well turned periods and graceful phrase—herein, he thought, lay the greatness of the ruler's work, not in policy or law-making, or the rough game of war. The interests of humanity therefore were at stake, not personal ambition only, or the credit of his favourite study. He writes to say that he had already passed many a sleepless night, in which he was haunted by the fear that he had culpably neglected to stimulate the progress of his pupil. He had not guarded carefully the purity of his growing taste, had let him turn to questionable models; but henceforth they should study the grand style together, eschew comedies and such meaner moods of thought and language, and drink only at the sources which were undefiled.

But the earnest scholar had outgrown his master, and even then was full of serious thoughts about great questions, of "the misgivings of a creature moving about in worlds not realised," and was not to be moved to give them up for canons of taste and rules of prosody. He gave in after years the Stoic Rusticus the credit of his conversion from letters to philosophy. "It was he who made me feel how much I needed to reform and train my character. He warned me from the treacherous paths of sophistry, from formal speeches of parade which aim at nothing higher than applause. Thanks to him I am weaned from rhetoric and poetry, from affected elegance of style, and can write now with simplicity. From him I have learned to concentrate my thoughts on serious study, and not to be surprised into agreeing with all the random utterance of fluent speech."

Medit. I. 7.

Other influences came in meantime to tempt his thoughts from graver themes. Honours and dignities pursued him more as he grew careless of their charms. Already at fifteen years of age he was made prefect of the city, or first magistrate of Rome, when the consuls were away to keep the Latin holidays; he was betrothed also to the daughter of Ælius Verus, who stood nearest to the imperial succession, and on his death two years later he was, at the express wish of Hadrian, adopted himself by Antoninus, who was raised into the vacant place, and was soon to be left in undisputed power. In accordance with the Roman practice, the young man called himself after the Aurelian family into which he passed, and may be spoken of henceforward as Marcus Aurelius, the name by which history knows him best. It was a brilliant prospect that opened now before his eyes. Titles of rank and offices of state followed fast upon each other; all the priestly colleges were glad to welcome him among their members; inscriptions in his honour which have been found even in far-off Dacia show that the eyes of men were turned on the young Cæsar, who already bore his part of the burdens of the empire. They soon learned, it seems, to love him, and to hope fondly of his youthful promise. The popular fancy multiplied his portraits, and an eye-witness speaks of the rude daubs and ill-carved statuettes which were everywhere exposed for sale, and which, in the shops and public taverns and over the tables of the money-changers, showed the well-known features of the universal favourite.

Offices of state

and popular favour

did not turn the head of the young prince,

But happily the incense of such flattery did not turn his head or cloud his judgment. Rather it seemed to

make him feel more deeply the responsibilities of high estate, and to make him the more resolved to fill it worthily. The sirens of the court had tried on him the witchery of their wanton charms, and the home life of Hadrian, which he shared awhile, had brought him into somewhat questionable circles; but his mother watched him with her constant care, and screened the purity of his growing manhood—a tender service for which he fondly thanks her memory in later years. Attracted by the high professions of the Stoic creed, he sought the secret of a noble life from the great doctors of the Porch, trusting with their help to find a sure guiding star of duty, and the true measure of all earthly grandeur. Their principles indeed had sometimes been austere and hard, counsels of perfection scarcely fitted for the frail and struggling, coldly disdainful of the weakness of our suffering manhood. But Marcus Aurelius was too generous and tender-hearted to nurse such a lonely pride of philosophic calm. He was vigorous in questioning his heart, but was stern only to himself.

who looked to the Stoic creed for guidance,

The man was not forgotten in the student. We may still read in the familiar letters which he wrote to his old friend and teacher about the pleasant days he spent in the country house at Lorium, how he dwells fondly on the infant graces of his children, and watches with anxious care the course of every little ailment. He speaks often of his little nestlings, and forgets his graver thoughts while he is with them. "The weather is bad, and I feel ill at ease," he writes, "but when my little girls are well, it seems that my own pains are of slight moment, and the weather is quite fair." Fronto enters readily enough into the

but without loss of tenderness and family affections,

as may be seen in his letters to Fronto,

same vein of homely sentiment, sends his loving greeting to the young princesses, "kisses their fat little toes and tiny hands," and dwells complacently upon the simple happiness of the prince's circle. "I have seen your little ones," he writes, "and no sight could have been more charming to me, for they are so like you in face that nothing could be more striking than the likeness. I was well rewarded for my pains in journeying to Lorium, for the slippery road and rough ascent; for I had two copies of yourself beside me, and both happily were strong of voice, and had the look of health upon their faces. One held a morsel of fine white bread in his hands, such as a king's son might eat, the other a hard black crust, fit for the child of a philosopher. In the pleasant prattle of their little voices I seemed to recognise already the clear tones of your harmonious speech."

Fronto had learned, it seems, to jest at the austerer studies of his former pupil, but he disliked them still as much as ever. Philosophy indeed was now a great moral force, and the chief teacher of the heathen world; but he could only think of it as the mere wrangling of pretentious quibblers, intent only on hair-splitting or fence of words, and with no power to guide the reason or to touch the heart. Prejudiced and one-sided as his criticism was, it had perhaps some value when he urged the future sovereign to remember the responsibilities of high estate, and the difference between the purple of the Cæsars and the coarse mantle of the Stoic sages. He had also a powerful ally who did not fail to use her influence. Faustina, the mother of the little nestlings whom Fronto wrote about so often, was affectionate and tender as a wife, but had all the pride of birth and the

who, like Faustina, had little liking for philosophers.

fastidious refinement of the fashionable Roman circles. She had little liking doubtless for the uncourtly doctors of the Porch, with their philosophic talk about equality and rights of manhood, grudged them their influence with her husband, and freely spent her woman's wit in petulant sally or in mocking jest. The sages took it somewhat ill, misjudging her levity of manner, and saw only wantonness or vice in the frank gaiety of the high-born dame. Hence among the earnest thinkers, or in literary circles, harsh sentiments began to spread about Faustina, and stamped themselves perhaps in ugly memories on the page of formal history.

Thus the years passed by in serious study and the cares of state, relieved by the tenderness of home affections; but history has no more details of interest to give us, till at length Antoninus closed his long reign of prosperous calm, leaving the throne to his adopted son, who was already partner in the tribunician power, the most expressive of the imperial honours. Marcus Aurelius might now have stood alone without a rival, if he had harboured a vulgar ambition in his soul. But he bethought him of the claims, else little heeded, of Lucius Verus, who like himself, had been adopted, at Hadrian's wish, by the late Emperor, and had grown up doubtless in the hopes of future greatness. He was raised also to the throne, and Rome saw now, for the first time, two co-rulers share between them on an equal footing all the dignity of absolute power.

On the death of Antoninus he shared the imperial power with Lucius Verus.

A.D. 161.

Their accession was not greeted at the first by fair omens of prosperity and peace, such as the world had now enjoyed for many years. Soon the bright sky was overcast, and the lowering storms began to burst. First the Tiber rose

The ominous prospect of floods and war.

to an unprecedented height, till the flood spread over all the low grounds of the city, with fearful loss of property and life, and only retired at length to leave widespread ruin and famine in its track. Then came rumours of danger and of war in far-off lands. In Britain the troops were on the point of rising to assert their liberty of choice and to raise their general to the seat of empire. But their experienced and gallant leader would not be tempted to revolt, and the soldiers soon returned to their allegiance, while their favourite was recalled to do good service shortly in the East. On the northern borders also the native races were in arms, and broke in sudden onset through the Roman lines, and a soldier of mark had to be sent to drive them back. But it was on the Euphrates that the danger seemed most pressing. There the Parthians, long kept in check by the memory of Trajan's military prowess, and by the skilful policy of his successors, challenged once more the arms of Rome. Years ago they had taken offence, it seems, because a ruler had been chosen for the dependent kingdom of Armenia, which had been the debateable ground for ages between the empires of the East and of the West. For awhile the war had been averted by fair words or watchful caution, but the storm burst at last at an unguarded moment, and swept over the border lands with unresisted fury. Armenia fell into the invaders' hands almost without a blow. The city in which the Roman general stood at bay was taken by storm; a whole legion cut to pieces; and Syria was laid open to the conquerors, who pressed on to ravage and to plunder.

The danger on the Euphrates was most pressing.

The danger was imminent enough to call for the presence of an Emperor in the field, and Verus started for

the East to rouse the soldiers' courage and organize the forces of defence. With him or before him went skilled advisers to direct the plan of the campaign, chief among whom was Avidius Cassius, a leader of ancient hardihood and valour. It was well for Roman honour that resolute men were in command; for the soldiers were demoralized by long years of peace. Sloth and self-indulgence in the Syrian cities had proved fatal to their discipline; and profligate Antioch, above all, with its ill-famed haunts of Daphne, had unnerved the vigour of their manhood. They cared little, as we read, that their horses were ill groomed and their equipments out of gear, so long as their arms were light enough to be borne with ease, and their saddles stuffed with down.

Verus starts for the East, A.D. 162.

where the soldiers were demoralized.

Verus, the general-in-chief, was worthy of such troops. He was in no haste to reach the seat of war, alarming as were the tidings which each fresh courier brought. He lingered in the south of Italy to enjoy the pleasures of the chase, and dallied amid the isles of Greece, where all his interests seemed to centre in the charms of music and of song. The attractions of the towns upon the coast of Asia tempted him often to halt upon the way, and when at last he came to Antioch he stooped so low as to treat for peace with the invader, and only resolved to prosecute the war in earnest when the Parthians spurned the proffered terms. Even then he had no mind to take the field in person, or risk the hazards of a soldier's life, but loitered far behind, safe in the rear of all the fighting, and gave himself up without reserve to frivolous gaieties and sensual excess, till even indolent natives of the Syrian towns began

In spite of his incapacity and sloth, his generals made the Parthians sue for peace.

to scoff, and courtly panegyrists found it hard to gloss over his slothful incapacity with their flattering phrases.

But hardier troops were in the field meantime than the licentious garrison of Antioch. The armies of the distant frontiers sent their contingents to the East, and at least eight legions may be traced in the campaigns that followed, besides a multitude of auxiliary forces.

Happily there were also skilful generals to handle them aright. Statius Priscus, the commander who had been put forward by his men against his will as a pretender to the throne, proved his loyalty once more by his successful march into Armenia, and the conquest of its capital Artaxata. Avidius Cassius meantime, with the bulk of the Roman army, pushed on direct towards Parthia, proved his valour and address in many a hard-fought battle, and drove back the beaten enemy at last beyond the walls of Seleucia and Ctesiphon. The humbled Parthians sued for peace, and gained it at the price of the border lands between the two great rivers. The fame of these achievements found an echo possibly in the far regions of the east of Asia, where no sound of western armies had hitherto been heard. The native chroniclers of China date the first Roman embassy to the Celestial Empire, with its presents of tortoiseshell and ivory, from the very year in which the war with Parthia closed; but the visitors, whether simply merchants or official envoys, entered China from the south, and not by the direct route through central Asia, which when they started was doubtless barred to them by the movements of the armies in the field.

A.D. 166.

Five years had passed away in the course of the campaign, and Verus at length unwillingly prepared to

leave the scene of his soldiers' glory, but of his own shame. Once only, at the urgent entreaties of his court, had he moved to the front as far as the Euphrates. He had journeyed also to Ephesus to meet his bride Lucilla, for fear that Marcus Aurelius might come with her in person, to see for himself the life which his son-in-law was leading. But his time was chiefly spent in listless dalliance and sybaritic ease, in which there was little else to mark the lapse of time except the recurring changes from his winter-quarters to his summer-palace. There was little in such a life to fire the fancy of poet laureate or courtly chronicler. Yet if we read the letter which he wrote to Fronto on the subject of the Parthian war, we shall find that he expects the history on which the old professor was engaged to make his name illustrious to future ages. He promises that his generals shall forward their account of the battles and campaigns, with special memoirs on the nature of the country and the climate, and offers even to send some notes himself, so great is his desire for glory. But calmly, as a thing of course, he takes the credit of all the successes won by the valour of his captains, and begs the rhetorician to paint in striking colours the general dismay in Syria before the Emperor arrived upon the scene to chain victory once more to the Roman eagles. The history which Fronto wrote has not survived; but we may judge perhaps somewhat of its tone, and of the author's willingness to cater for the vanity of his princely correspondent, when we read his pretentious eulogy of the struggle of generosity between the two co-rulers on the subject of the titles to be taken in honour of the successes in the East. Marcus Aurelius declined to be called Parthicus or Armeniacus in memory of a

Verius claims the merit of the triumph

and Fronto writes a courtly panegyric.

war in which he took no part; but Verus, not to be outdone in seeming modesty, would only accept the names on condition that he shared them with his colleague. "To have pressed this point and won it," says the courtier, in his hyperbolic vein, "is a greater thing than all the glories of the past campaigns. Many a stronghold like Artaxata had fallen before the onset of thy conquering arms, but it was left for thy eloquence to storm, in the resolute persistence of thy brother to refuse the proffered honours, a fortress more impregnable."

Little is told us of what passed meantime during the five years in Italy, where Marcus Aurelius ruled alone; and the scanty fragments of our knowledge come chiefly from monumental sources. The endowments for poor children founded by the charity of recent Emperors were put under the charge of consular officials instead of simple knights, in token of the importance of the work, while on occasion of the imperial marriage, which bound the princes by fresh ties, the claims of poverty were not forgotten, but fresh funds were set apart to rear more little ones, who were to bear probably the names of the two reigning houses, as the earlier foundlings had been called after Trajan and Faustina.

M. Aurelius meantime endows charitable foundations,

Another measure of this date seems to have been prompted by a tender interest for the material welfare of the people. Some four or five officials of high rank had been sent from Rome of late with large powers of jurisdiction in the county courts of Italy, in the interest alike of central authority and local justice, rising as they did above the town councillors and magistrates of boroughs. These "*juridici*," as they were called, were now entrusted with the further duty of watching over the supplies of food,

appoints *juridici*,

and the regulation of the corn trade, for Italy was letting her lands pass out of culture, and growing more dependent every year upon the mercy of the winds and the surplus of foreign harvests. An inscription found at Rimini informs us that the seven wards of the old city, and all the corporations in it, passed a public vote of thanks to one of these officials for his laborious exertions in behalf of themselves and all their neighbours in the hard times of famine.

and a prætor to be guardian of orphan children,

A third change breathes the same spirit of compassion for the helpless and the destitute. A "prætor" was specially commissioned to watch over the welfare of orphan children, and to see that the guardians did not abuse their trust or neglect the interests of their wards. By a singular coincidence the first of these officials thus appointed became soon after a *juridicus* in Northern Italy, and also won an honorary notice of the energy with which he had met the crisis of famine, and brought to countless homes the Emperor's thoughtful tenderness.

and caused births to be registered.

A new provision was closely connected with these changes, as well as with the needs of a well-ordered state. All births in Italy were to be registered henceforth in a public office within the space of thirty days—a necessary step if public or private charity were to try to cope with the spread of pauperism and despair.

He works unremittingly himself at public business;

For the rest the Emperor had no high ambition, nor cared to signalise himself by great achievements. He was content to let the Senate rule, and treated it throughout with marked respect, being always present at its meetings when he could, and when business was pressing he sat oftentimes till nightfall. He never spared himself

meantime, but worked on with unremitting labour till his pale face and careworn looks told all who loved him how serious was the strain upon his feeble powers of body, and made his physicians warn him that he must give himself more rest or die. For he was anxious above all things to do justice promptly to his people, by himself or through his servants, and to have no arrears of work. With this view he added largely to the number of the days on which the law courts might be opened, and sought the counsel and the active aid of the most enlightened men around him. His old master Junius Rusticus had to give up his learned leisure, and take perforce to politics, to be consul first, then prefect of the city, to show his old pupil by his own example how to turn the Stoic maxims to practical account, and prove that the ruler of mankind must learn to govern others by first governing himself.

but was called away from civil duties to the distasteful work of war.

But Marcus Aurelius had little leisure after this to study the arts of civil rule in peace, for untoward destiny required him to spend the best years of his life in an inglorious warfare with enemies unknown to fame. His was too gentle and sensitive a nature to feel at home among the armies: too large-minded to be dazzled by the vanity of fading laurels. The war was none of his own seeking, and he would gladly have purchased peace at any price save that of honour or of the safety of his people. But the dangers were very imminent and grave, and could not everywhere be safely left to the care of generals of lower rank. The austere lessons of philosophy had taught him not to play the sophist with his conscience, or to shirk distasteful offices when duty called.

The Roman lines lay like a broad belt around the

civilised world, and the trusty legionaries stood there on watch and ward. The wild tribes beyond had been long quiet, cowed seemingly by Trajan's martial energy and Hadrian's armaments of war. But now some passionate impulse seemed to pass like a fiery cross along the borders, and barbarous hordes came swarming up with fury to the attack, and threatened to burst the barriers raised against them. The Parthians had been humbled for a time, but were soon to show themselves in arms once more. The Moors of Africa were on the move, and before long were sweeping over Spain with havoc and desolation in their track. The Caledonians of the far west were irritated rather than frightened by the long lines of wall and dyke which had been built to shut them in, and their untamed fierceness was enough to make the Roman troops retire before the children of the mist.

From the mouth of the Dniester to where the Rhine bears to the sea the waters of all its tributary rivers a multitude of restless tribes with uncouth name and unknown antecedents, Teutonic, Slave, Finnish, and Tartar, were roaming in hostile guise along the northern frontiers, and ready to burst in at every unguarded point. It is time to enter more into details on the subject of these wars, to see in what spirit the meditative student faced the rough work of war, and how far he showed the forethought of a ruler cast on evil times.

The fortunes of the Roman arms in Britain.

We turn with natural interest to read of the fortunes of his arms in Britain, but there are only scanty data to reward our search. At the outset of this period a new commander, Calpurnius Agricola by name, had been sent to meet the threatening rumours of a rising among the native or the Roman forces. His name recalled the

memory of the famous captain of an earlier age, whose career of glory in the island found in his kinsman Tacitus a chronicler of note. But there is no evidence that the efforts of the later general were crowned with like success. Seven years afterwards at the least he is mentioned in an inscription found near Hadrian's wall; but there is no trace of any forward movement in the course of all these years, not a single monumental notice of a Roman soldier upon Scottish soil, though under Antoninus an imperial legate had pushed his way some eighty miles beyond the old ramparts of defence, and raised a second line of wall and dyke between the Clyde and the Frith of Forth to screen the conquered lands from the indomitable races of the north. Reinforcements had been brought meantime from countries far away; five thousand horsemen came in one contingent from the lower Danube, where a friendly tribe had taken service in the pay of Rome, but they found their match in the hardy warriors of the Picts and Scots, before whom Sarmatian ferocity and Roman discipline combined could scarcely make head or even hold their ground. But formal history hardly deigns to note their doings at this time, and the troubles of that distant province seemed insignificant enough, no doubt, to the imperial court.

The dangers on another frontier were more threatening. The army of defence upon the Danube had been weakened to meet the pressure of the Parthian war, and the Marcomanni and their neighbours, who were constantly on the alert, had taken advantage of the withdrawal of the legions, and harried the undefended provinces with fire and sword. From the mouth of the Danube to the confines of Illyria the barbarian world was on the move, and all those elements of disorder, if allowed to

The danger on the Danube was more pressing,

gather undisturbed, might roll ere long as an avalanche of ruin on the south. There was no time to be lost in parrying this danger, when peace was restored on the Euphrates. The acclamations of the city populace had hardly died away, or the pomp of the triumphal show faded from men's thoughts when both Emperors resolved to start together to conduct their armies in the field. But in spite of the successes lately won they were in no cheerful mood to open fresh campaigns. The tone of public sentiment was sadly low; the brooding fancy of the people drew presages of disaster and defeat for coming days from the misfortunes of the present. The effects of the famine were still felt in Italy, though years had passed since its ravages had first begun, and officers of state had been ready with their timely succours. A yet more fatal visitant had stalked among them, and spread a panic through the hearts of men. The soldiers who had come back from the East to take part in the reviews which graced the public triumph, or to return to their old quarters, brought with them the fatal seeds of plague, and spread them rapidly through all the countries of the West. The scourge passed on its desolating course from land to land. In the capital itself numbers of honoured victims fell, while deaths followed so fast upon each other that all the carriages available were needed for the transport of the plague-stricken corpses through the street. Stringent laws had to be passed to regulate the interment of the bodies, and provisions made in the interests of the poorer classes, for whom the state took up the task which slipped from their despairing hands. While men's hearts were thus failing them for fear, and death was knocking at the door of

and both Emperors started for the northern frontier,

while the plague was spreading rapidly within the empire, A. D. 167.

every class without distinction, appeal was made to the ministrations of religion to soothe and reassure their troubled minds. *Lectisternia*, as they were called, were solemnised; days of public mourning and humiliation set apart; and as if the old national deities were ineffectual to save, men turned in their bewilderment to the mystic rites of alien creeds, and drew near with offering and prayer to the altars of many an unknown god.

The races of the North meantime, who had learnt that the Emperors were on the way, already heard upon the border the tramp of the advancing legions, and their ardour for war was cooling fast in the presence of the forces of defence. Hardly had the princes arrived at Aquileia, when the tidings came that their enemies had withdrawn beyond the river, and were sending in hot haste envoys to sue for peace, bearing the heads of the counsellors who had urged them to attack the Roman lines. So complete seemed the discouragement among them that the Quadi, who were at the time without a leader, asked to have a chieftain given them by Rome. Verus, we read, in the carelessness of his self-indulgent nature, thought that the danger was quite over, and was urgent to return. But it needed little foresight to discern that it was but a temporary lull in the fury of the storm, and that only a stern and watchful front could maintain the ground which had been won. The meagre annals of the period fail to tell us how long the Emperors were in the field. We only hear that within two years of their return they were summoned from Rome once more by the news that the hollow truce was broken, and their old enemies again in arms. They set out together, as before, for Aquileia, where the armies

The border races retire, and beg for peace;

but before long are in arms again, and the Emperors, marching to attack them,

A.D. 169.

were to be organized and drilled during the winter months, to be ready for the spring when the campaign might open in real earnest.

But the plague, whose ravages had never wholly ceased meantime, broke out afresh with redoubled fury in the crowded camp, and the death rate mounted with alarming speed. The famous Galen was called in to try all that medical experience and skill could do, but his efforts failed to arrest the spread of pestilence or bring its victims back to health. In face of such fearful waste of life the plan of the war had to be changed. The camp was broken up without delay; the various battalions were dispersed in separate cantonments; and the Emperors set forth on their return.

are checked by the spread of the plague,

They were not far upon the homeward way when, at Altinum, Verus was struck down with a sudden attack, from which he never rallied, and Marcus Aurelius was left to rule alone. Alone indeed he had often stood already; the colleague who was taken from him had helped him little with the cares of state, and there were few who could regret his loss. Unnerved by years of selfish luxury in the East, Verus had come back with shattered body and with diseased mind to startle the sober citizens of Rome with freaks of dissolute wantonness which recalled the memory of Nero and the orgies of his House of Gold. Marcus Aurelius was not blind to the luxury and extravagance of his ignoble nature. He had sent him to the East, perhaps, in hope that the braver manhood in him might be roused by the sobering contact of real cares. He had seen to his dismay that the careless worldling had come back with a motley train of actors, dancers, parasites, and buffoons, to be the pastimes of his idle

which is fatal to Verus.

life, while in default of manlier pleasures he loved to have gladiators in to fence and hack themselves before his eyes.

Still the Emperor had borne calmly and patiently the vices of his colleague, and even now that he was dead he proposed the usual vote of honours in the Senate; but he dropped some words, perhaps unconsciously, which betrayed to watchful ears that he had long chafed and fretted, though in silence, and now was resolved to rule alone without the embarrassment of divided power. He might perhaps have been more careful had he known that rumour was busy with the death of Verus, and pointing to foul play with which his own name was coupled, though indeed in all days of personal government scandalous gossip circulates about the court, and, as an old biographer remarks, no one can hope to rise above suspicion if the pure name of M. Aurelius was thus befouled.

Thenceforth M. Aurelius reigned alone,

He had lost also a young son whom he loved fondly and mourned deeply, for the sages of the Porch had never taught him, as they did to others, to disguise his feelings under a cloak of Stoic calm, and the Senate's votes of honours and of statues were but a sorry comfort to the tender father.

But he had little leisure for his grief. The danger on the Danube was still urgent, and the same year saw him once more on his way northward, to guide the plans and share the labours of the war. All through his reign that danger lasted; nor did he ever shirk the irksome duty, but was constantly upon the scene of action, and lived henceforth more on the frontier than at Rome. In default of full details in the ancient writers we may judge how arduous was the struggle by the evidence of the

and was soon called once more to the seat of war in the North,

inscriptions. Of the thirty legions which made up the regular complement of the Roman army, more than half took part in the Marcomannic war, and have left repeated tokens of their presence in epitaphs or votive offerings. We may find the traces also of the irregular contingents which marched with them to the field from many a far-off province and its fringe of barbarous races, and which though variously manned and armed were welded into unity by the stern discipline of Rome. For she soon learned the lesson, since familiar to the world, to group distinct nationalities round a common centre by a strong imperial system in which each helped in arms to keep the others down. As the war went on, the Emperor had recourse to far more questionable levies, if what we read is true, enrolling exiles, gladiators, and even slaves in two new legions which he brought into the field. The work of recruiting went slowly forward, and could scarcely supply the constant drain of war. The central provinces had long ago wearied of military service, since Augustus raised his legions on the border lands, and at Rome itself no volunteers would answer to the call; but the lazy rabble hooted as they saw the gladiators go, and said in hot displeasure, "Our gloomy prince would rob us even of our pleasures to make us turn philosophers."

where the struggle was long and arduous.

The pestilence was still abroad, and spread its ravages among the ranks, clouding with discouragement all their hopes and efforts. They showed little courage in the field; sometimes they were driven back in panic fear. In one such rout the fortress of Aquileia had nearly fallen, but the bravery of its garrison saved it from disaster. To make matters worse, the treasury was empty, drained perhaps by the charitable outlay for the sufferers by plague and famine. The Emperor drew

upon his privy purse; when that too failed, he stripped his palaces of their costly furniture, put up to auction the art-treasures which Hadrian's fine taste had gathered in the course of the journeys of a lifetime, and sold them all without reserve, while for himself he needed little more than the general's tent and soldier's cloak.

Brighter days set in at last to reward his persevering courage, though dangers meantime had thickened in his path. The tribes of the Rhine and Danube had joined hands, forgetting for a while their mutual rivalries in the hope of carrying the Roman lines in one great simultaneous assault. Their women were stirred with patriotic ardour, and fought and died beside their husbands. The rigour of the winter could not check them; for in time of frost, we read, they challenged the legionaries to mortal duel on the ice-bound river, where the southerners, dismayed at first, found a firm footing at the last by standing on their shields, and closing in a death grapple with the foe. In the ranks of Rome none showed more resolution than the Emperor himself, none faced with a calmer or a stouter heart the hardship of the wintry climate, the monotony of the life of camps, or the horrors of the crash of war. At length he was rewarded by seeing the assailants sullenly retire before the firm front of his array; and the Danubian provinces were left a while undisturbed.

When the Marcomannic war was over for a time, the campaign against the Quadi followed,

Not content with resting on his laurels he set forth to chastise the Quadi, and drive back the hostile tribes yet further from his borders. The hard winter had been followed by a hot and parching summer which made the labours of the march exhausting to the troops. In the midst of the campaign they were lured into a pass where the natives beset them on all

sides. Worn out by heat and thirst, and harassed by continual onsets, they were on the point of breaking in disgraceful rout when the scorching sun was covered, and the rain burst in torrents from the clouds to cool and refresh the weary combatants. The enemy came swarming up once more to the attack, but they were met with pelting hail and lightning flashes, and driven back in utter consternation to lay down their arms before the imperial forces. Dion Cassius, who tells the story in greatest detail, accounts for the marvel by the magic incantations of an Egyptian in the army, whose potent spells unlocked the windows of heaven, and called to the rescue powers unseen. And in accordance with the legend we may see on the monumental column, which pourtrays in sculptured forms the military story of this reign, a Jupiter Pluvius of giant stature whose arms and hair seem dripping with the moisture which the Romans run to gather, while the thunderbolts are falling fast in the meantime upon the hostile ranks. But Xiphilinus, the Christian monk who abridged the historian's tedious chapters, taxes his author roundly with inventing a lying tale to support the credit of the heathen gods. His pious fancy fondly dwells upon a miracle of grace, vouchsafed in answer to the Christian prayers of a battalion come from Melitene, in the east of Asia, which was called thenceforth the "Thundering" legion, in token of the prodigy wrought by their ministry of intercession. The fathers of the Church took kindly to the story, and pointed the moral with becoming fervour. But the twelfth legion, which had indeed been sent long since from the siege of Jerusalem to Melitene, to defend the line of the Euphrates, had borne in earlier years the name, not of

in the course of which we read of the supposed marvel of the "Thundering Legion." A. D. 174.

"Fulminans" indeed but "Fulminata," and so appears on an inscription which was written as early as the time of Nero.

There was now a prospect of at least a breathing space in the long struggle with the races of the North. The humbled tribes consented to give back the captives swept away in border forays. The human spoil to be surrendered by the Quadi reached the tale of 50,000, and a neighbouring race which had resisted with desperate valour restored, we are told, twice that number when the war was closed. Some hordes of the Marcomanni consented to abandon their old homes, and were quartered in the country near Ravenna; but before long they tired of the dulness of inglorious peace, and took once more to butchery and rapine, till Italy sadly rued the fatal experiment which future Emperors were one day to copy.

The Emperor was still busy with the arrears of work which the war had brought with it in its train, when the alarming news arrived that a governor in the East had raised the banner of revolt, and seemed likely to carry with him the whole province as well as the legions under his command. Avidius Cassius had won distinction in the Parthian campaigns, and to his skill and energy the successes of the war were largely due, while the general in chief was lounging at ease in the haunts of Syrian luxury. He had been chosen at the first as a commander of the good old type to tighten the bands of discipline among the dissolute soldiers who were more formidable to quiet citizens than to the foe. He soon checked with an unsparing hand the spread of luxury and self-indulgence, let them stroll no more at will in the licentious precincts of Daphne, or in like scenes of riot, but kept them to hard fare and steady drill, threatening to make them

The revolt of Avidius Cassius;

winter in the open field, till he had them perfectly in hand. Before long a new spirit of hardihood and valour spread among the ranks, till the army, going forward with their leader in the path of glory, proved itself worthy of the ancient memories of Rome.

Yet Verus eyed with jealousy the talents which eclipsed his own, was stung by words or looks of sarcasm which fell sometimes from the hardy soldier, or perhaps divined the latent germs of the ambition which was one day to make a rebel of the loyal warrior. He warned his brother Emperor to be upon his guard, and urged him even to dismiss the general from his post before his influence with the army grew too potent. The answer of M. Aurelius is recorded, and throws an interesting light on his pure unselfish nature. "I have read," he writes, "the letter in which you give utterance to fears ill-becoming an Emperor or a government like ours. If it is the will of heaven that Cassius should mount the throne, resistance on our part is idle. Your own forefather used to say that no prince can kill his own successor. If it is not written in the book of destiny that he shall reign, disloyal efforts on his part will be followed by his fall. Why then deprive ourselves, on mere suspicion, of a good general, whose services are needful to the state? His death, you say, would secure the prospects of my children. Nay, but it will be time for the sons of M. Aurelius to die when Cassius is able more than they to win the love and further the happiness of our people." Nor were these mere idle phrases, for Cassius was retained in command of Syria and the border armies, and treated with an undiminished confidence, which he repayed by quelling a revolt in Egypt and by victories in Arabia.

against whom M. Aurelius had been warned in vain.

But the man of action seems to have despised the scholar prince as a mere bookworm, fitter to take part in verbal quibbles than in cares of state, to have thought him too easy-tempered and indulgent to keep strict watch over his servants and check their knavery and greed. In a letter to his son-in-law, which is still preserved, he dwells on such abuses, how truly we have no means of knowing. "Marcus is a very worthy man, but in his wish to be thought merciful he bears with those of whose character he thinks but ill. Where is Cato the old censor, where are the strict rules of ancient times? They are vanished long ago, and no one dreams of reviving them again; for our prince spends his time in star gazing, in fine talk about the elements and the human soul, in questions of justice and of honour, but neglects the interests of state meanwhile. There is need to draw the sword, to prune and lop away with energy, before the commonwealth can be put upon its former footing. As for the governors of the provinces, if governors they can be called who think that offices of state are given them that they may live at ease and make their fortunes—was not a prætorian præfect only the other day a starveling mendicant, rich as he is now?—let them enjoy their wealth and take their pleasure while they can, for if heaven smiles upon my cause they shall fill the treasury with the riches they disgorge." It would be hazardous to accept the views of a discontented rival in place of solid evidence upon this subject; but it is likely enough that the Emperor may have been too tolerant and gentle to repress with needful promptitude the abuses of his servants. The machinery of government was perhaps

The contempt expressed by Avidius Cassius for the powers of the Emperor as a ruler,

Vulcacii Gallicani c. 14.

and complaints of his subordinates.

out of gear when the chief who applied the motive force was busy with a great war upon a distant frontier, and glad to steal the moments of his leisure for the congenial studies of philosophy.

Certainly if we may trust the stories gleaned by the writers of a later age, Avidius Cassius was not the man to err on the side of sentimental weakness. He had gained a name, it seems, among the soldiers for a severity near akin to cruelty, had invented startling forms of punishment for marauders and deserters, crucifying some in frightful torments, and leaving others hamstrung by the way to be a living warning to the rest. He carried the sternness of his discipline so far as to hurry off to execution the officers who had just returned in triumph from a border foray for which he had himself given no sanction. But we can put little trust in the talk of the day, for few cared to deal tenderly with the memory of an unsuccessful rebel. Probably it is only such an afterthought of history when we are told that he came of the family of Cassius, the murderer of the great Cæsar, and that like his ancestor he hated the very name of monarchy, deploring often that the imperial power could only be assailed by one who must be emperor himself. It is idle now upon such evidence as we possess to speculate upon his motives, or to say how far personal ambition was disguised by larger and unselfish aims. Of Marcus Aurelius he seldom spoke, at least in public, save in respectful tones, and only appealed to his partisans to rally round him when a false rumour of the prince's death was spread abroad.

We know little of the motives of the movement, which soon failed. A D. 175.

The movement was short-lived, threatening as was its march at first. It spread through Syria without let or hindrance, and all beyond the Taurus was won by the

usurper's arms. It seemed that there was no time to be lost; and the Emperor was on his way to face the struggle in which an empire was at stake, when the news came that Cassius was no more, having met an inglorious death by the hand of a petty officer of his own army, the victim of revenge more probably than loyal feeling. The Emperor heard the tidings calmly, showed regret at the death of the pretender, and would sanction no vindictive measures, though Faustina, whom idle rumour has accused of urging Cassius to revolt, had written to him before in a tone of passionate resentment, praying him not to spare the traitor, but to think of the safety of his children. He answered her with tenderness, chiding her gently for her revengeful language, and reminding her that mercy was the blessed prerogative of imperial power. He wrote in a like spirit to the Senate also, to let its members know that he would have no sentence of attainder passed on the wife or children of the fallen leader, and no proscription of his partisans. For himself he only wished that none had died already, to rob him of his privilege of mercy, and now he was resolved that in that cause no more blood should flow. The Senate read his words with gladness, were well pleased to drop the veil on the intrigues in which some of their own body were concerned, and carefully entered on their minutes all the dutiful phrases and ejaculations in which the counsellors showed their thankfulness and admiration. The letters and despatches of the rebel, which were full, probably, of fatal evidence against his accomplices in the army or at Rome, fell into the hands of the governor of Syria, or some said of the Emperor himself, but were burnt without delay to relieve the fears of the survivors.

The Emperor showed no vindictive feeling,

The people of Antioch had sided eagerly with Cassius, and used their wit in contemptuous jest against their prince, moving him to resent their disloyalty by forbidding for a while all public gatherings for business or pleasure. Soon, however, he relented, and even visited the city, when he passed by in his state progress to restore order to the troubled East. Now for the first time in his career could he set foot in those far-off regions, and wander among the memories of ancient peoples. Before he left Rome, as it would seem, he had the tribunician title conferred on Commodus, the son who was soon to take his place, and then more than a year was spent in the long journey. His wife Faustina died upon the way, at a tiny village near the range of Taurus, which was raised, in honour of her, to the dignity of a city and a colony. For the empress herself the Senate passed, at his request, the solemn vote which raised her to the rank of the immortals, and one of the sculptures of his triumphal arch pourtrayed her as borne aloft to heaven by the guardian arms of Fame.

but went to restore order in the East.

His wife Faustina died upon the way. A. D. 175.

He took Egypt in his homeward way, and at Alexandria was willing to forget the signs of sympathy which the citizens had shown his rival, leaving his daughter to their care in token of the confidence with which he trusted them. At Smyrna he wished to hear the eminent Aristides lecture, whose vanity was such that he would only consent to speak while attended with a long train of pupils, who must have free liberty to clap him when they would. The Emperor let them all in willingly enough, and himself gave the signal for applause at the eloquent periods of the famous sophist.

At Athens, where he left some lasting traces of his

visit in the endowment of professorial chairs, he had himself admitted to the Eleusinian mysteries, whose venerable symbols might haply shadow forth to his inquiring fancy some new beliefs or hopes about the world unseen.

For more than a year the Emperor had rest at Rome, and signalised his period of repose by charitable cares for the *Puellæ Faustinianæ*, the poor girls who were to be reared in memory of his wife, and bear her name. We may see at Rome a bas-relief in which the sculptor's fancy has pourtrayed the maidens clustering round the noble dame, and pouring corn into the folds of the garment which one of them is holding for the purpose. The medals also of the year record the liberal largess given to the populace of Rome at the festivities which followed the marriage of the youthful Commodus, on which occasion the bonds which the state held against its debtors were thrown into the fire in the forum, while similar munificence was shown in helping the ruined Smyrna to rise once more in its old stately beauty after the havoc caused by a great earthquake.

During his short rest at Rome, A.D., 177, he endowed the Puellæ Faustinianæ and married his son Commodus,

Meantime the thunder-clouds were gathering on the northern frontier, and the military chiefs were anxious to have the Emperor again upon the scene. Once more he started for the seat of war, after observing with a scrupulous care the ceremonial customs of old time. The spear-head taken from the shrine of Mars was dipped in blood and hurled by the prince's hand in the direction of the hostile borders, within which in the earlier days of the Republic the lance itself was flung as a symbol of the war thereby declared. Once more victory crowned the efforts of the Roman leaders, and the title of *Imperator* was taken for the tenth time by the prince.

but had soon to start again for the northern wars,

The war itself seemed well-nigh over, but M. Aurelius was not permitted to survive it.

While in Pannonia, either at Vienna or at Sirmium, he was struck down by disease, probably by the plague, whose ravages may still be traced along those countries by the evidence of old inscriptions. Dion Cassius, as usual, takes up the vilest story he can find, and charges Commodus with parricide, in the form of poison given by a doctor's hand. Other writers tell us only that the dying Emperor's son showed little feeling, save the selfish wish to escape from the danger of contagion by a speedy flight. When the friends who were gathered round his deathbed asked whom he wished to be the guardians of his young successor, he answered only "Yourselves, if he be worthy;" then drawing his Stoic mantle round his head, he died as he had lived, with gentle dignity. His health had never been robust, and it was sorely tried by the hardships of a soldier's life, by hurried journeys to and fro, and the rigour of those winters by the Danube. His resolute spirit had drawn thus far on its reserves of moral force to keep the frail body to its work, but the keen blade wore out its sheath at last.

and was struck down on his way, A.D. 180.

The Romans mourned their Emperor as they had seldom mourned for one before, yet on the day when the funeral procession passed along the streets they abstained from outward show of grief, convinced as they were, says his biographer, that heaven had only lent him for a time, and taken him soon back again to his own place among the immortal gods. "You also," adds the writer, addressing Diocletian his prince, "regard M. Aurelius as a god, and make him the object

to the great grief of his subjects.

Jul. Capitolini, c. 19.

of a special worship, praying oftentimes that you may copy the virtues of a ruler whom Plato himself with all his lessons of philosophy, could not excel."

The monuments in his honour.

In honour of the victories which his arms had won over the formidable warriors of those border lands, great monuments were raised at Rome. One of these, an arch of triumph, stood for nearly fifteen centuries till a Pope (Alexander VII.), ordered it to be thrown down, because it was thought to block the way through which in days of carnival the crowds of masked revellers used to pass. "The arch," says a modern writer, "had happily escaped the barbarians, the mediæval times, the Renaissance; but a Pope was found not only to lay bold hands upon it, but to have the naïveté to take credit to himself for doing so in an inscription which the curious still may read upon the site."

A second monument is standing still, but the papal government which dealt so hardly with the arch of triumph, tried to rob the Emperor of this glory also, for the title carved upon his column by the order of a second Pope (Sixtus V.) ascribes the work to Antoninus Pius. Like Trajan's column, of which it is a copy, it is formed of cylinders of marble piled upon each other, round which is coiled in spiral form a long series of bas-reliefs which illustrate the Marcomannic war. The literary records of the ten years' struggle are too meagre to enable us to give their local colour to the scenes pictorially rendered; the sculptured figures too complacently exhibit the unvarying success of Roman armies to represent with fairness a war in which the German and Sarmatian tribes tasked year after year the military resources of the Empire. One set of images there is which frequently recurs in varying forms, and we may trust to these as evidence

of the constant hindrance to the forward movement of the legions in the wild lands beyond the Danube. The broad current of the great river and its tributary streams, the uncleared forest, and the dangerous morasses, are often shown in symbolic guise upon the column, and in these Roman vanity was ready to admit the obstacles and perils which carried with them no dishonour to the eagles.

Trophies of war were little suited to the character of such a ruler, but happily we have a worthier monument in the "Thoughts" or "Meditations" which, intended for no eye but his, reflect his passing sentiments from day to day. Written here and there in the moments of his leisure, sometimes on the eve of battle in the general's tent, sometimes in the dreary monotony of winter quarters and by the morasses of the Danube, they have little nicety of style or literary finish, they contain no system of philosophy set off with parade of dialectic fence; but there is in them what is better far, the truthful utterance of an earnest soul, which would lay bare its inmost thoughts, study the secrets of its strength and weakness, and be by turns the accused, the witness, advocate and judge.

His "Meditations" are a far worthier monument of his genius,

reflecting his habits of earnest self-enquiry,

Self-enquiry such as this had been of old the favourite tenet of Pythagorean schools, it had been pressed by Socrates upon his age with a sort of missionary fervour, it had since passed almost as a commonplace into the current systems of the day, and become a recognised duty with the earnest-minded, just as the practice of confession in the Church of Rome. With M. Aurelius it was a lifelong habit, and covered the whole range of thought and action. "How hast thou behaved thus far," he asks himself, "to the gods, thy parents, brethren, children, teachers, to those

Medit. v. 31.

who looked after thy infancy, to thy friends, kinsfolk, to thy slaves? Think if thou hast hitherto behaved to all in such a way that this may be said of thee,

Ne'er has he wronged a man in word or deed.

Call to recollection how many things thou hast passed through, and what thou hast been able to endure, and that the history of thy life is fully told and thy service drawing to its close; think how many fair things thou hast seen, and how many pleasures and pains thou hast despised; how much that the world holds in honour thou hast spurned; and with how many ill-minded folks thou hast dealt kindly." In the course of such reflections he recurs with tender gratitude to the memory of those who watched over his early years, or helped to form his character or enrich his thought; to the good parents, teachers, kinsmen, friends, for the blessings of whose care he thanks the gods so fervently, while he dwells fondly on the features of the moral character of each. He speaks of his mother's cheerful piety and kindly temper, of the instinctive delicacy with which she shunned not the practice merely but the thought of evil, of how she spent with him the last years of her short life, guarding the virgin modesty of his young mind, that he might grow up with the purity of his manhood unbefouled.

and tender gratitude to all his teachers, friends, and kinsmen who had helped to form his character.

The twenty years of unbroken intercourse with his adoptive father had not faded from his thoughts when he penned in all sincerity these graceful lines:

Medit. vi. 30.

"Do everything as a pupil of Antoninus. Remember his constancy in every act which was conformable to reason, his evenness in all things, his piety, the serenity of his countenance, his sweetness, his disregard of empty fame, and his efforts to under-

stand things duly; how he would let nothing pass without having first most carefully examined it and clearly understood it; how he bore with those who blamed him unjustly without blaming them in return; how he did nothing in a hurry; how he listened not to calumnies, and how exact an examiner of manners and actions he was; not given to reproach people, nor timid, nor suspicious, nor a sophist; how he bore with freedom of speech in those who opposed his judgments; the pleasure that he had when any man showed him anything better; and how religious he was, without superstition. Imitate all this, that in thy last hour thou mayest have as good a conscience as he had."

He speaks too in later years with thankfulness of his aged guardian's care, which would not trust him to the risks and uncertainties of the public schools, but grudged no outlay on his education, supplying him with the best teachers of the day at home.

As he passes in memory over the long list of these, he does not care to dwell upon the order of his studies, or how much he learnt from each of them of the stores of art and learning, but he tries rather to remember in each case what was or might have been the moral impress on his character from the examples of their lives

His governor, he says, gave him a distaste for the passionate excitement of the circus or the gladiators' fights, taught him to "endure labour, and want little; to work with his own hands, and not to meddle with the affairs of others, or listen readily to slander." Diognetus turned his thoughts from the trifles to the realities of life, introduced him to philosophy, and made him feel the value of ascetic training, of the coarse dress and the hard pallet bed. Fronto meantime was leading him to note "what envy and duplicity and

Medit. i. 5–17.

hypocrisy are in a tyrant, and how commonly the nobles of the day are wanting in parental love." From Severus he learnt to admire the great men of the past—Thrasea, Helvidius, Cato, Brutus; "and from him I received the idea of a polity in which there is the same law for all, a polity administered with regard to equal rights and freedom of speech, and the idea of a kingly government." Rusticus, who did him the good service of introducing him to the mind of Epictetus as expressed in the memoirs of his pupils, led him to see the vanity of sophistic emulation and display. In the example of "Apollonius he saw that the same man can be most resolute and yielding;" he had before his eyes a teacher who regarded his skill and experience in instruction as the smallest of his merits; and from him he learnt "how to receive from friends what are thought favors, without being either humbled by them or letting them pass unnoticed." In Sextus he saw the beauty of a genial courtesy, and "had the example of a family governed in a fatherly manner, and of living conformably to nature, and gravity without affectation. He had the power of accommodating himself readily to all, so that intercourse with him was more agreeable than any flattery; and at the same time he was most highly venerated by those who associated with him."

Alexander the grammarian never used "to chide those who uttered any barbarous or strange-sounding phrase; but dexterously introduced the very expression which ought to have been used, in the way of answer or assent, or joining in enquiry about the thing itself, and not about the word." In Maximus he saw unvarying cheerfulness, "and a just admixture of sweetness and of dignity in the moral character. He was beneficent, ready to forgive, free from falsehood, and presented the appearance

of a man who could not be diverted from the right, rather than of one who had been improved." Finally, after the long survey of all the influences of earlier days, he thanks the powers of heaven for all "their gifts and inspirations," which tended to make the path of duty easy, "though I still fall short of it through my own fault, and from not observing the admonitions, or I may almost say, the direct instructions of the gods."

Few who have read the remaining Meditations can think that M. Aurelius is here numbering complacently his own good qualities of heart and temper, or throwing a decent cloak over his praises of himself. There is a danger doubtless that the habit of constant introspection may lead to vanity, or at least to a morbid persistency of self-centred thought which may be fatal to the simple naturalness of healthy action. But in this case at least there are no traces of such influence. The candour of his early youth seems reflected in the utterances of later years. He has a lively horror of deceit and affectation, would have his soul be "simple and single and naked, more manifest than the body which surrounds it," so that the character may be written on the forehead as "true affection reads everything in the eyes of those it loves."

There is no morbid vanity or self-love in such oblique reference to his own qualities,

x. 1.

xi. 15.

He wonders "how it is that every man loves himself more than all the rest of men, but yet sets less value on his own opinion of himself than on the judgment of the world. If a god or a wise teacher should present himself to a man, and bid him think of nothing and design nothing which he would not express as soon as he conceived it, he could not bear it even for a single day. So much more respect have we

xii. 4.

to what our neighbours shall think of us than to what we shall think of our own selves."

There is yet another danger, which is very real, when earnest thought broods intently upon moral action, and dissects its motives and its aims. It often ends in seeing mainly what is mean and selfish, in having eyes only for the baser side of human nature, in becoming fretful and suspicious, or in feeding an intellectual pride by stripping off what seem the mere disguises of hypocrisy and fashion, and pointing to the cankerworm of selfishness in all the flowers and fruits of social life. Do we find anything in these Meditations which may point to such painfulness of self-contempt, or to any impatient scorn of the pettiness and vices of the men and women whom he knew?

and no undue self-contempt or pessimism,

A pure and noble nature such as his could not but be keenly sensitive to evil, and he does not shrink from speaking of it often. "Begin the morning by saying to thyself, I shall meet with the busybody, the ungrateful, arrogant, deceitful, envious, unsocial," but he goes on to find a motive for patience and forbearance. He was often sick and weary, it would seem, of social troubles and of uncongenial work. "Men seek retreats for themselves, houses in the country, seashores and mountains; and thou too art wont to desire such things very much. . . . It is in thy power whenever thou shalt choose to retire into thyself. For nowhere either with more quiet or more freedom from troubles does a man retire than into his own soul. Constantly then give thyself this retreat, and renew thyself; and let thy principles be brief and fundamental, which, as soon as thou shalt recur to them, will be sufficient to cleanse the soul completely, and to

ii. 1.

though he was often weary of the evil.

iv. 3.

send thee back free from all discontent with the things to which thou returnest." He would find rest and comfort in a larger, more hopeful view of things. "There are briers in the road—turn aside from them. Do not add, And why were such things made in the world? For thou wilt be ridiculed by a man who is acquainted with nature, as thou wouldst be by a carpenter or a shoemaker if thou didst find fault because in his workshop there were to be seen shavings and cuttings from the things which he was making." He exhorts himself to imitate the patience of the powers of heaven. "The gods who are immortal are not vexed because during so long a time they must tolerate continually men such as they are, and so many of them bad; and besides this, they also take care of them in all ways. But thou, who art destined to end so soon, art thou weary of enduring the bad, and this too when thou art one of them?" But above all he would aim at cheerfulness in the thoughts of what is good and noble. "When thou wishest to delight thyself, think of the virtues of those who live with thee; for instance, the activity of one, and the modesty of another, and the liberality of a third, and some other good quality of a fourth. For nothing delights so much as the examples of the virtues, when they are set before us in the morals of those who live with us."

viii. 50.

But he tried to be patient

vii. 70.

vi. 48. and cheerful.

But M. Aurelius felt the cares of state too deeply to indulge himself in the listless contemplation which might unnerve him for the work of life. He bids himself "not to be a man of many words, or busy about many things," but to act like "a Roman

He would not indulge himself in listless contemplation, but remember the hard work of life.

iii. 5. v. 1. and a ruler, who has taken his post like a man waiting for the signal which summons him from life." Or again: "In the morning when thou risest unwillingly, let this thought be present. I am rising to a man's work. Why then am I dissatisfied if I am going to do the things for which I exist, and for which I was brought into the world? Or have I been made for this, to lie in the bedclothes and keep myself warm? Those who love their several arts exhaust themselves in working at them unwashed and without food. But are the acts which concern society more vile in thy eyes and less worthy of thy labour?"

vi. 30. Again: "Reverence the gods and help men. Take care that thou art not made into a Cæsar." And to throw light upon his meaning, we may read the strong words which are poured out so

iv. 28. abruptly: "A black character; a womanish character; a stubborn character; bestial, childish, animal, stupid, counterfeit, scurrilous, fraudulent, tyrannical!"

In the fulness of time philosophy was seated in his person on the throne, but he was too wise to entertain

ix. 29. heroic aims and hopes of moulding human nature like the potter's clay. "How worthless are all these poor people who are engaged in politics, and, as they think, are playing the philosopher! . . . Do not expect Plato's Republic, but be content if the least thing goes well, and consider such an event to be no small matter. For who can change men's opinions; and without a change of opinion what else is there than the slavery of men who groan while they are pretending to obey? Draw me not aside to insolence and pride. Simple and modest is the work of philosophy." How modest was

He was not too ambitious or too hopeful in his aims,

its aim, how far from all utopian fancies of the use of force, we may gather from another passage: "What will the most violent man do to thee if thou art still kindly towards him, and if, as opportunity occurs, thou gently admonishest him and calmly correctest his errors at the very time when he is trying to do thee harm, saying, Not so, my child; we are made by Nature for something else: I shall certainly not be harmed, but thou art injuring thyself? Show him by gentle tact and by general principles that this is so, and that even bees do not as he does, nor any animals of social nature. This thou must do affectionately and without any rancour in thy soul; and not as if thou wert lecturing him, nor yet that any bystander may admire." xi. 18.

"The kingdom of heaven cometh not with observation." Not by the strong hand of the master of thirty legions, nor by the voice of the imperial lawgiver, but by the softer influence of loving hearts like his, was the spirit of a nobler manhood to be spread on earth. For when he speaks, as he often does, of charity, his words are not the old commonplaces of the schools, but tender phrases full of delicate refinement and enthusiastic ardour, such as no work of heathendom can vie with, such as need but little change of words to bring before us the most characteristic graces of the Gospel standard. "Think of thyself not as a part merely of the world, but as a member of the human body, else thou dost not yet love men from thy heart; to do good does not delight thee for its own sake; thou doest it still barely as a thing of propriety, and not yet as doing good to thine own self." What is this but the well-known thought, "If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it?" but full of tender charity and anticipations of Christian feeling, vii. 13.

"As a dog when he has tracked the game, as a bee when he has made the honey, so a man when he has done a good act does not call out for others to come and see, but goes on to another act as a vine goes on to produce again the grapes in season. Must a man then be one of these, who in a manner act thus without observing it? Yes." Here we seem to hear the precept, "Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth."

v. 6.

Again, on the duty of forgiveness: "When a man has done thee any wrong, immediately consider with what opinion about good or evil he has done wrong. For when thou hast seen this thou wilt pity him, and wilt neither wonder nor be angry. It is thy duty then to pardon him." Translate this into Christian language, and we have the words, "Forgive them, for they know not what they do." Or again: "Suppose that men kill thee, curse thee. . . If a man should stand by a pure spring and curse it, the spring never ceases sending up wholesome water; and if he should cast clay into it or filth, it will speedily disperse them, and wash them out, and will not be at all polluted." Surely this is a variation on the theme, "Bless them that curse you and despitefully use you."

vii. 26.

viii. 51.

It was the ardour of this charity which kept from extravagance or bitterness his sense of the pettiness of all the transitory interests of earth. For he often has his mystic moods in which he feels that he is only a stranger and a pilgrim journeying awhile amid vain and unsubstantial shows. "Consider the times of Vespasian. Thou wilt see all these things; people marrying, bringing up children, sick, dying, war-

but refrained from extravagance or bitterness in all his sense of the unreality of earthly good;

ring, feasting, trafficking, flattering, suspecting, plotting, ... heaping up treasure, grumbling about the present. Well then, the life of these people is no more. Pass on again to the times of Trajan. Again all is the same. Their life too is gone. So view also the other epochs of time and of whole nations, and see how many after great efforts fell, and were resolved into the elements. . . . . For all things soon pass away and become a mere tale, and complete oblivion soon buries them . . . . What then is that about which we ought to employ our serious pains? This one thing; just thoughts and social acts, and words which never lie, and temper which accepts gladly all that happens." iv. 32.

Or as he writes elsewhere, in a still sadder vein, but with the same moral as before: "Soon, very soon, thou wilt be ashes, or a skeleton, and either a name or not even that; . . . . the things which are much prized in life are empty and rotten, and trifling, and like little dogs biting one another, and little children quarrelling, laughing, and then straightway weeping. But fidelity and modesty and justice and truth are fled v. 33.

Up to Olympus from the wide-spread earth.

What then is there which still detains thee here? . . . . To have good repute amidst such a world as this is an empty thing. Why then dost thou not wait in tranquillity for thy end, whether it be extinction or removal to another state? And until that time comes, what is sufficient? Why, what else than to venerate the gods and bless them, and to do good to men, and to practise tolerance and self-restraint." He wearies of his books, of the life of courts, of dreams of glory and the conqueror's ambition, of the blindness and waywardness of men.

ix. 3. "For this is the only thing, if there be any, which could draw us the contrary way, and attach us to life, to be permitted to live with those who have the same principles as ourselves. But now thou seest how great is the trouble arising from the discordance of those who live together, so that thou mayst say, Come quick, O death, lest perchance I too should forget myself."

"Vanity of vanities! all here is vanity," he seems to say, "save reverence and charity and self-restraint;" but true to his Stoic creed, he still clings firmly to the thought that there is a Ruling Providence and Perfect Wisdom, which is guiding all things for the best, although its judgments may be unsearchable and its ways past finding out.

clinging also to the thought of a Ruling Providence,

It is the peculiar feature of his character that this religious optimism has the power not only to content his reason, but to stir his heart, and fill it at times to overflowing with a gush of tenderness and love. "Everything harmonises with me which is harmonious to thee, O Universe. Nothing is too early nor too late for me which is in due time for thee. Everything is fruit to me which thy seasons bring, O Nature; from thee are all things; in thee are all things; to thee all things return. The poet says, Dear city of Cecrops; and wilt thou not say, Dear city of Zeus?" Or again: "What is it to me to live in a universe devoid of gods? . . . But in truth they do exist, and they do care for human things, and they have put all the means in man's power to enable him not to fall into real evil."

which stirred his heart with tenderness and love

iv. 23.

ii. 11.

It moves his heart with gratitude to think that the

sinner has a place given him for repentance, and may come back from his moral isolation. "Suppose that thou hast detached thyself from the natural unity, yet here there is this beautiful provision, that it is in thy power again to unite thyself. God has allowed this to no other part, after it has been cut asunder, to come together again. But consider the kindness by which He has distinguished man, for He has put it in his power not to be parted at all from the universal, and when he has been parted, He has allowed him to return and to resume his place." viii. 34.

This reverent tenderness of feeling and delicate sympathy with Nature made him find a certain loveliness in things which had no beauty to the ancient world. "Even the things which follow after those of natural growth contain something pleasing and attractive. . . Figs when they are quite ripe gape open; and in the ripe olives the very circumstance of their being near to rottenness adds a peculiar beauty to the fruit. The ears of corn bending down and the lion's eyebrows, and the foam which flows from the mouths of wild boars, and many other things . . . consequent upon the things which are formed by nature, help to adorn them, and they please the mind; so that if a man showed a feeling and a deeper insight . . . there is hardly one of those which follow by way of natural sequence which will not seem to him to be in a manner so disposed as to give pleasure." There was something here beyond what he had learned from his old Stoic masters. They had taught him that the world was ruled by an Intellect Supreme, with which it was man's privilege, as it was his duty, to be in constant unison; but their phrases were cold and hard and unimpassioned till they were trans- and delicate sympathy with Nature, iii. 2.

figured by his moods of tender fancy. They had shown their followers how to meet the ills of life with dignity and calm, and to face death with stern composure, if not with a parade of tragic pride, as if philosophy had robbed their last enemy of his fatal sting. But it is a gentler, humbler voice that cries, "Pass through this little space of time conformably to nature, and end thy journey in content, just as an olive falls off when it is ripe, blessing Nature who produced it, and thanking the tree on which it grew."

iv. 48.

Yet withal we are haunted by a certain melancholy which runs through all these Meditations, and as we read his earnest words we feel a ring of sadness sounding in our ears. For he had hopes and aspirations for which the Stoic creed could find no place; and he sorely felt the problems which his reason could not solve. "How can it be that the gods, after having arranged all things well and benevolently for mankind, have overlooked this alone, that some men, and very good men, and men who, as we may say, have had most communion with the Deity, and through pious acts and religious observances have been most intimate with the Deity, when they have once died should never live again, but should be quite extinguished?" He would fain hush to rest such yearning doubts, but the heart probably remained unconvinced by the poor logic which his reason had to offer. "But if this is so, be assured that if it ought to have been otherwise, the gods would have done it. . . . But because it is not so, if in fact it is not so, be thou convinced that it ought not to have been so."

which does not however exclude a certain melancholy

xii. 5.

At times too there is something very sad in the confessions of his lonely isolation, for the air is keen and

chilling on the heights to which he towered by character as well as station. "Live as on a mountain. . . . Let men see, let them know a real man who lives according to Nature. If they cannot endure him, let them kill him. For that is better than to live thus." Or again "Thou wilt consider this then when thou art dying, and thou wilt depart more contentedly by reflecting thus. I am going away from such a life, in which even my associates, in behalf of whom I have striven, prayed, and cared so much, themselves wish me to depart, hoping perchance to get some little advantage by it. Why then should a man cling to a longer stay here?"

and sense of isolation.

x. 15.

x. 36.

From the imperfect sympathy of fellow-men he turned, as by natural instinct, to communion with the Eternal and Divine. But here again he found a sorry comfort in the system of his choice. The Universal Mind, the Abstract Godhead, or the Soul diffused through all creation and revealed by Nature's myriad voices—these were cold and neutral phrases which might indeed convince his reason, but could not animate or stir his heart. He could not therefore rest content to use them always in their austere nakedness, but must invest the cold abstractions with the form and colour of a personifying fancy, bringing thus before us on his pages the postulates of emotion rather than of logic. But meantime the poor artisans and freedmen of the Christian churches were praying to their Father in heaven with all the confidence of trustful childhood. The rabble of the streets were clamouring for their lives, and quickening the loyal zeal of many a Gallio on the seat of judgment; but they found comfort in the thought of One who called them

The austerity of the Stoic creed could not content him.

The contrast of the contemporary Christians.

friends and brothers, and who had gone before them on the road which they must travel, supported by the unseen help of an Eternal Love. They laid their dead within the Catacombs, tracing on the rough hewn walls the symbol of the Cross or the form of the Good Shepherd; but they felt no dark misgivings and no inexplicable yearnings, and so were happier in their life and death than the philosophic Emperor of the proud Roman world, who speaks once only of the Christians, and then notices them as facing death with the composure of mere obstinate pride.

M. Aurelius was unfortunate in his successor, Commodus.

It is sad to think that an Emperor so good was followed by a successor so unworthy; sadder still that that successor was his son. Could not the philosophic ruler, Julian asked, rise above a father's doting fondness, and find some one better fitted to replace him than a selfish stripling who was soon to prove himself a frantic tyrant with a gladiator's tastes? He had a son-in-law beside him, Pompeianus, a soldier and a statesman of ripe age, or failing him there were all the worthiest of Rome to choose from, as he himself had been singled out in earlier years, and raised by adoption to the empire. He had himself served for many years of tutelage, under the eyes of Antoninus, to fit him for the responsibilities of absolute power; was it wise to hope that an inexperienced youth, cradled in the purple, and exposed to the mean arts and flattery of servile spirits while his father was far away upon the Danube, would have the wisdom or the self-control to provide for the welfare of the subject millions? Roman gossips had an ugly story of the signs of cruelty which had shown themselves in Commodus already; how in a fit of passion at a slave who had failed to heat his bath, he ordered him to be flung

into the furnace, but was tricked by the smell of frying sheepskin, which, thanks to an attendant's happy thought, took the place of the poor bath-man. True or false, the tale may serve to illustrate the current talk, and show how little men dared to hope that the father's virtues would be continued in the son.

Was M. Aurelius unfortunate in his wife as well as his successor? We must think him so indeed if we believe the common story, so confidently repeated since, that she disgraced him by the profligate amours which were the talk of the whole town and the mark of scurrilous jests upon the stage; that she intrigued with Cassius and urged him to revolt; and died by her own hand at last, in fear of imminent detection.

Was he also in his wife Faustina?

Yet we have grave reasons to mistrust this picture of Faustina's character, and the evidence on which it rests is very poor. The Emperor himself, in a striking passage of his memoirs, speaks of her in a very different strain. When in the loneliness of the general's tent beside the Danube, there rise before his thoughts the memories of the kinsmen, friends, and teachers who had guided him by their counsels or example, when he thanks the powers of heaven for all their goodness to him in the past, he does not fail to praise them for the blessing of a wife "so obedient, so affectionate, and so simple." The touching pictures of the Emperor's home life in Fronto's letters bring her to our fancy as the tender wife and loving mother. Her own recorded words, written in hot passion at the news of the revolt of Cassius, are full of affection towards her husband and cries of vengeance on the traitor, and data recently discovered in inscriptions in the Haurân have disposed of

Reasons for doubting the truth of the common story.

Med. I. 17.

the doubts as to their genuineness raised long ago by critics. In the countless medals struck in honour of her by the Emperor or Senate she appeared sometimes as the patroness of Female Modesty, sometimes as the power of Love and Beauty ; and flattery, however gross, would hardly have devised such questionable titles to provoke the flippant wit of Rome had such grave scandals been believed.

We cannot doubt indeed that some years later there were stories much to her discredit floating through the streets of Rome. One writer of repute now lost to us is expressly charged with blackening her memory; another (Dion Cassius) raked up commonly into his pages so much of the dirt of calumny that we listen to his statements on the subject with reserve. The feeble writers of the Augustan history a century later repeat the stories, but avowedly as only current rumour, which they had not tested for themselves. But the Epitomists of later ages drop out the qualifying phrases altogether, and speak of her without misgiving or reserve as another Messalina on the throne, and later history has commonly repeated the worthless verdict of these most uncritical of writers. If we hesitate to think that such grave charges could be altogether baseless, we may note that Faustina, in her pride of birth and fashion, had little liking for the sages whom her husband gathered round him, and outraged probably the scruples of these ascetic Puritans by her gay defiance of their tastes. But their displeasure may have carried a moral sanction with it, and lived on in literary circles, and influenced the tone of history itself. The rabble of the streets grew now and then impatient of the serene wisdom of their ruler, and when he was inattentive at the games, or tried to lessen the excitement of the gladiator's bloody sport,

they thought it a good jest to point to Faustina's fashionable pleasures, and to hint broadly that it was natural enough that she should look for sympathy elsewhere than to so august a philosopher and book-worm. When Commodus in later years unbared the vileness of his brutal nature, men might perhaps remember all this gossip of the past, and say that he could be no true son of the benign ruler whom they now regretted, thus fondly embalming the memory of the prince while sacrificing to it the honour of his wife.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ATTITUDE OF THE IMPERIAL GOVERNMENT TOWARDS THE CHRISTIANS.

The Christians were for some time regarded only as a Jewish sect, and remained undisturbed;

For a century or more the imperial government took little notice of the Christian church as the organized form of a distinct religion. It knew it chiefly as a Jewish sect, as a fitting object for suspicion or contempt, but not commonly for active persecution. The race indeed with which they classed it was peculiarly distasteful to the Roman rulers, as fanatical and unruly, and stirred at times by inexplicable moods of wild excitement. After the terrible struggle of a war almost of extermination they had risen in fierce revolt in Palestine, Cyprus, and Egypt; in all the great centres of industry and trade in which they spread, they gained a name for turbulence and strife and obstinate self-assertion. Yet for themselves at least their national worship was respected, for the policy of Rome found a place in its pantheon for the gods of all the countries of the

Empire, and all might live together unmolested side by side.

But when they tried to be aggressive, to make proselytes even in the streets of Rome, and to unsettle men's traditional beliefs, the civil power stepped in to check and to chastise the disturbers of the public peace. It was thus that in the old days of the Republic senate and consuls oftentimes took measures to stay the progress of the eastern creeds when they claimed a right of settlement at Rome; and the rulers of the early empire acted in like spirit as defenders of the national faith when it was menaced by what they thought the intolerant bigotry of the Jewish zealots. In the reign of Tiberius, for example, large numbers of such aliens, whose uncouth superstitions seemed to spread contagion round them, were flung into the island of Sardinia, to live or die, as it might happen, in the miasma of that pestilential climate. In the days of Claudius again we read of a disturbance among the Jewish immigrants, which grew to such a height as to be followed by a summary edict of general banishment from Rome. The strange words of Suetonius in which he speaks of the impulse given by a certain Chrestus to the tumult, "impulsore Chresto tumultuantes," point probably to the hot disputes and variance caused among the synagogues by the ferment of the new Christian teaching. The disturbance was soon quieted, and the peremptory order was withdrawn, or followed only by the departure of the leading spirits; and the little Christian church lived for a time securely screened from notice and attack under the shelter of the legalized religion of the Jews, with which it was commonly confused in the fancy alike of the people and of their rulers. But the story of Pomponia Græcina

for the Roman government tolerated all creeds which were not aggressive.

serves to show that these exclusive creeds might not with impunity overleap the barriers of race and social class. A noble Roman lady was accused of tampering with new forms of superstition, according to the rule of ancient days, before a family council formed by her husband and her nearest kinsmen. After her acquittal we are told that she shunned the world of fashion, and lived for years a sober life of meditation. Ecclesiastical historians have commonly believed that they could read in the somewhat scornful language of the heathen writer a description of the early type of Christian devotion.

The story of the cruelties of Nero paints in far more lurid colours the growing hatred of the populace and the constant dangers of the infant church, which now, for the first time, clearly appears to view in the pages of the classical historians. The butchery and the tortures were indeed a mere freak of unscrupulous ferocity by which the Emperor thought to divert men's minds from the great fire which had made so many thousands homeless, or at least to discharge the lowering thunder-clouds of popular discontent upon the heads of the poor Christian artisans and freedmen. "They suffered," says Tacitus, "those votaries of a pernicious superstition, not indeed that they were guilty of the fire, but for their hatred of the human kind." We may well ask ourselves the causes of the horror and repugnance here and elsewhere expressed so strongly, and which served as a convenient excuse for Nero's wanton cruelty, guided possibly by the Jewish jealousy of his wife Poppæa. How could the gentle courtesies of the new morality inspire such feelings in the society which watched its growth?

But in the time of Nero we may trace distinct dislike to the Christians as such,

The Jewish race was one which could not in those

due partly to their Jewish origin,

days mingle peacefully with the peoples of the West. In Rome and Alexandria and others of the great cities of the ancient world there were frequent frays and tumults in the populous quarters where they flocked; their peculiar habits and dogged self-assertion stirred the antipathy of their heathen neighbours, who had no eyes for their industry and thrift and the nobler aspects of their moral character. But the Jews had at least an old and national religion, which might be borne with so long as its worshippers kept peacefully to their own circles, while the Christians, though really, as it seemed, of the same race and customs, seemed to draw themselves apart in still more obstinate isolation, to hold aloof even from their countrymen, and exhaust the patience of the world by meaningless disputes about the nice points of spiritual dogmas. Then let them do so at their cost. If they disowned their ancient worship, they must forfeit the legal sanction which had screened them hitherto.

though they forfeited their claims to the protection which the Jewish religion enjoyed.

Again, in the personal bearing of the Christians there was much which unavoidably outraged the social sentiments of others, for they could not easily take part in the business or pleasures of a world on which the stamp of idolatry was set. They must shun the pleasant gatherings of their friends or neighbours, if they did not wish to compromise their principles or shock the feelings of the rest by their treatment of the venerable forms of heathendom. In the family observances at the chief epochs of a Roman's life they could not be present to show their sympathy in joy or sorrow, for religious usages took place at each, and they dared not touch the unclean thing. At the recurring seasons of festivity they seemed

They were regarded also as unsocial and morose fanatics,

unmoved amid the general gladness, for they could not worship at the altars, or join in the ceremonial processions, or hang their garlands on the statues of the gods. If they enlisted in the legions, they might be called upon to adore the Genius of the Emperor, or in case of their refusal be charged with rank disloyalty. No wonder if they held themselves aloof from public life, when at every turn they were confronted by the forms of a ritual which was accursed in their eyes. When their fellow-citizens kept holiday, they could not venture to the theatre without a shock to their sense of right and decency, while they turned with loathing from the ghastly horrors of the gladiatorial combats. They saw the dangers and they felt the force of the allurements to vice by which they were surrounded, and they turned away almost with despair from a world which seemed so wholly given over to the power of sensuality and sin. They had no eyes for the beauty of an art which was enlisted in the service of idolatry, nor for the symbolic value of the ancient forms which were one day to be hallowed for church use. Appealing to a higher standard than the will of Cæsar or the laws of Rome, they could not accept the current estimates of men and manners, but looked often with a grave displeasure at what seemed innocent to other eyes. Hence men came to think of them as stern fanatics, shunning the pleasures and courtesies of social life, sectarians who would cut themselves adrift from all the natural ties of country and of race.

Nay more, they were branded even with impiety, because they took no part in any recognised forms of worship, but shrank from all the common usages of national religion. Those who visited their homes found no little niche or shrine to

and accused of impiety,

hold the figures of the guardian Lares; the oratory which perhaps took its place was empty as the temple at Jerusalem which had moved the wonder of the conqueror Pompeius. From the first they had refused all adoration to a Cæsar; still more emphatically they refused it after the cruelties of a Nero had coloured with their stains of blood the Apocalyptic visions of Antichrist and future judgment.

In addition to these charges there were others; wild delusions of distempered fancy, then, as in other ages, greedily caught up by the credulous and prejudiced masses. The simple love-feasts held at first in token of brotherhood and thankful memories were perverted into scenes of foul debauch; and the stories of accursed pledges, cemented by the blood of slaughtered infants—such as were told of old of Bacchanalian orgies or of the conspiracy of Catiline—passed once more from mouth to mouth, finding possibly some poor excuse in Eucharistic language misconstrued. They were often classed with the professors of magic and of necromancy, with the charlatans and quacks of every kind who haunted the low quarters of the town and preyed upon the ignorant fancy of the vulgar. Yet among these the Christians often found their bitterest rivals, in the deceivers who feared to be unmasked, or to see the profits of their trade endangered. When once the suspicion and dislike of the populace were roused against them as impious misanthropes, the wildest stories were invented and believed to justify the hatred which was felt. If the Nile failed to overflow the fields in time of drought; if the plague spread its havoc through the towns; if the harvest failed or earthquakes left their track of ruins; the Christians were the guilty wretches by whom the wrath of heaven was caused. In Northern Africa, we read, it was in later

while foul stories were told and credited about them.

days a proverb, "If there is no rain, fix the blame upon the Christians."

In the ignorant antipathy of the lower orders lay the chief danger of the early church, and it was on this which Nero reckoned when he made it the scapegoat of the blind fury of the people. But his cruelty, frightful as it was, was personal only, causing no change of legal status, an exceptional moment in a time of toleration. The Christian religion was not yet proscribed, and its professors had little cause to fear the Roman governors or judges, save when the people clamoured loudly for their blood. The reign of Domitian, indeed, is vaguely spoken of as one of persecution ; but there is little evidence of this in the annals of the time, though here and there noble Romans, like Clemens and Domitilla, may have suffered for lapsing from the creed of their fathers.

Nero reckoned on this popular antipathy,

But with the second century of the empire darker times set in in earnest, and a general ban was put at last by law upon the Christian church. We may find in Pliny's letters the fullest notice of the change. As governor of Bithynia he wrote to Trajan from his province to tell him of the new religionists who were brought before his seat of justice, and to ask for instructions how to deal with them. He had never had to do with them before, he said, nor ever sat in court when such cases were brought up. He was doubtful whether the name of Christian should be criminal in itself, or if it would be right to look only to the practice implied in the profession. Information had been sent to him by unknown hands, and many had been denounced to him by name. On enquiry it appeared that while some denied the charge entirely, others admitted that they had been

but Christianity was not made illegal till the time of Trajan.

drawn away, though they had ceased to be Christians long ago. When sharply questioned as to the practice and belief of the society to which they had belonged, they said its members used to meet from time to time at break of day, and sing their hymns of praise to Christ, and bind themselves by sacred pledges, not to any deed of darkness, but to keep themselves unstained by fraud, and falsehood, and adultery. There were stated gatherings besides, in which they joined each other in a simple meal, till all such forms of social brotherhood were put down by a special edict. To test the truth of such confessions, Pliny had two slave girls tortured, but nothing further was avowed by them nor by the rest who frankly owned that they were Christians, and would not recant or flinch even after repeated threats.

Their unyielding obstinacy seemed to the writer of itself to call for punishment, though beyond that he could only find the traces of extravagant delusion. But he shrank from acting on his own discretion without instructions from the Emperor himself, so grave were the interests at stake owing to the numbers of every age and sex and social grade whose lives and fortunes were involved. For the contagion, as he called it, had been spreading fast through towns and villages and lonely hamlets; the ancient temples had been almost deserted, and few were found to buy the offerings for the altars, till fear of punishment had lately quickened into life the forms of wonted reverence.

Reasons may be urged indeed for doubting the genuineness of this letter, at least in the form in which we have it now; but we may at least accept the reply of Trajan, which was very brief and weighty. He would give no encouragement to official eagerness in hunting out charges of this

Trajan's answer to Pliny determined the law.

kind; no anonymous evidence should be accepted; any Christians should meet with pardon for the past if they would adore the national gods; but punishment must be enforced on all who stubbornly refused. This rescript formally decided the legal status of the new religion and the proceedings of the imperial agents. The Christian church could now no longer claim the protection which the synagogue enjoyed; the forms and pledges of its union were illegal; any who would, might come forward to inform against them, and governor or judge might not pardon even if he wished.

Indeed, even to enlightened rulers such as Trajan, who were not disposed to credit the gross calumnies of popular fancy, there was much that might seem dangerous in the mysterious influence of the new religion. Its talk of equality and brotherhood might sound like the watchword of a social revolution, and the more so as its members were recruited chiefly from the toiling millions. The ties of sympathy between its scattered members were like the network of a widespread conspiracy, whose designs might be political, though masked under religious names. Its meetings, often held at night, were an offence against the legal maxim that no new clubs must be formed or organized without the sanction of the civil power; the refusal of its members to comply with a few time-honoured forms, or to swear even by the Emperor's Genius, seemed like the disloyal wish to break wholly with the past and to parade a cynical contempt for the established powers. The obstinate unwillingness to bow even to the will of Cæsar, and the claim to be guided by a higher law, had an unwelcome sound in the ears of absolute power. Some too there were, no doubt, who pushed their courageous pro-

The reasons why the government might naturally distrust the church.

test to the extreme of discourteous defiance, in their sensitive fear of dallying with the forms of idol worship, like the soldier who refused to appear before his general with the laurel garland on his head, and whose scruples called out a treatise of Tertullian in their defence; or who else vaunted openly their indifference to death in their impatient longing for the martyr's crown. It was probably of such as these that Marcus Aurelius was thinking when he penned his single reference to the Christians, saying that the soul should be ready at any moment to be parted from the body, not from *mere obstinacy* as with them, but *considerately and with dignity, without tragic show.*

During the whole period before us there was little change in the attitude of the central power. The justice of Trajan, the refined curiosity of Hadrian, the humanity and gentle wisdom of the Antonines, seemed alike insensible to the goodness and the grandeur of the Christian morality, and alike indisposed to sanction the new influence which was spreading through the heathen world. Its speedy progress might well seem alarming to the defenders of the established order. It has been thought indeed that Pliny's letter must have been tampered with in early times, since the numbers of the Christians are insisted on so strongly by a writer who confesses that beforehand he knew nothing of their tenets. Yet the churchmen of that age proudly point to the striking signs of onward movement. "There is no spot upon the earth," says Justin, "even among barbarous peoples, where the name of the Crucified Redeemer is not heard in prayer." Irenæus thinks that the church is spread through the whole universe, and Tertullian in the lively phrases of his rhetoric urges, "We are but of yesterday, and we already fill your empire, your cities,

your town councils, your camps, your palace, and your forum; we leave you only your temples to yourselves. Without recourse to arms, we might do battle with you simply by the protest of our separation; you would be frightened at your isolation." And the oldest of the Catacombs of Rome has seemed to competent observers to point in the forms of its symbolic art to the number of the churchmen who, even in that early age, laid their dead within these obscure labyrinths of stone.

This rapid spread of the young churches, exaggerated as it probably has been, was a real element of danger. Not that the Emperors had any persecuting zeal, or any wish to hunt the poor victims down. But the clamours of the populace grew louder, and the provincial governors were often called on to enforce the law without appeal to any higher courts. Some looked on with indifference from the seat of justice while the crowd of ignoble criminals passed before them, marvelling only at the conscientious scruples which declined to sprinkle a few grains of incense on the altars. Others were glad to court the favour of the people over whom they ruled by the sacrifice of a few stiff-necked zealots, fearing also to hear the cry, "If thou lettest this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend."

The succeeding Emperors incline to mercy, but the popular dislike grows more intense.

So we have the striking fact, that on the one hand, after Trajan's rescript, the lowering clouds seem to be ever gathering more blackly, and the explosions of popular fury grow more frequent; on the other, each of the Emperors is represented in church history as doing something to shield the Christians from attack or to temper the austerity of justice. Thus we have the letter sent by Hadrian to the governor of Asia Minor, in which he comments strongly on the disorderly

attacks upon the Christians, such as might encourage the malice and extortionate claims of false accusers. Only indictments in strict legal form should be accepted; none should be arrested on vague rumour, and none convicted, save of acting contrary to law. This would amount to virtual toleration, unless taken in connection with the rule prescribed by Trajan which made it penal to refuse to adore the gods of Rome. But even as thus qualified, it would be a boon to the oppressed, as it might tend to check the greed of the informers, and strengthen the hands of an impartial judge.

The rescripts of Hadrian and Antoninus very questionable.

But the letter itself is not beyond suspicion, though far more credible than one which purports to be written by one or other of the Antonines. to a general assembly of the deputies of Asia. The message, briefly stated, runs somewhat as follows: "I hold that the gods may be safely left to vindicate their honour on the heads of those who spurn them. The Christians prefer to die rather than be faithless to the power they worship, and they triumph in the contest, for they are true to their own principles. Their neighbours in their panic fear of natural portents and disasters neglect to pray and offer to their gods, while they persecute the Christians who alone show real religion. Provincial governors often wrote to my sainted father on this subject, and were told not to meddle with the Christians unless they were guilty of treason to the state. I too would follow the same course of action, and have informers warned that they will be liable to penalties themselves if they bring vexatious charges of the sort." An imperial mandate couched in such strong terms would certainly have screened the Christians from attack and have marked an epoch in the history of the church, and as such have been constantly appealed to

in the law courts as also in the writings of Apologists. But it is probable enough that something was done to check the violence of popular feeling or the malice of informers, and that we have the traces of such action, coloured in after days by grateful feeling, or overstated from the fancy that princes so large-hearted and humane must have been in sympathy with the noblest movements of their times.

Yet, sad to say, to the reign of the philosophic Emperor belongs many a page of the long chronicle of martyrdom, and stories are given us at length of the sufferings of confessors whom the good ruler was either powerless or indifferent to save. One of the earliest of such records may be found in a letter of the church of Smyrna which describes the last days of the venerable Polycarp. The passion of the populace had broken out against the Christians, and after witnessing the death of meaner victims, they began to clamour "Away with the Atheists!" "Let Polycarp be sought." The aged bishop wished to stay in the city at his post of duty, but his friends urged him to withdraw and shun the storm. He was tracked, however, from one house in the country to another, till at length he would fly no further, but waited in his hiding-place for his pursuers, saying only "God's will be done." As they returned with him to the city they were met by the chief officer of the police, who took up Polycarp into his carriage, and spoke to him with kindness, asking what harm there could be in calling Cæsar lord, and in offering sacrifice to save his life. Polycarp at first made no reply, but at last said, "I will not do what you advise me." Threats and violence were of no avail with him, and he went on his way calmly to the governor's presence, though a deafening

The martyrdom of Polycarp. Euseb. Hist. Eccl. iv. 15.

din was made by the assembled multitude. The proconsul urged him to swear by the Genius of Cæsar, and to say "Away with the Atheists!" like the rest. The old man looked gravely at the crowd with a sigh and with uplifted eyes, then said, pointing to them with his finger, "Away with the Atheists!" The governor urged him further. "Swear; curse Christ and I release thee." "Eighty and six years," he answered, "have I served him, and he has never done me harm, and how can I blaspheme the king who saved me?" When still pressed, he said, "If you wish to know what I am, I tell you frankly that I am a Christian; if you would hear an account of Christianity, appoint a day and hear me." The governor, who was no fanatic, and would have gladly saved him, asked him to persuade the people, but he refused to defend himself before them. The threats of the wild beasts and of the stake were all of no avail, and at last it was proclaimed "Polycarp has confessed himself a Christian." Then all the multitude of Gentiles and of Jews who dwelt at Smyrna yelled out in furious clamour, "This is the teacher of impiety, the father of the Christians, the enemy of our gods, who teaches so many to turn away from worship and from sacrifice." And they cried with one accord that Polycarp must be burned alive. We need not dwell longer on the story of his martyrdom, the outline of which seems genuine enough, though there are features of it which were added probably by the fancy of a later age.

A few years afterwards another storm of persecution raged in Gaul, at Vienna and Lugdunum (Lyons), the record of which is given us at full in a letter from the suffering churches to their brethren of Asia Minor. The various parts of the chief actors in the scene are stated in it with

The persecution at Vienna and Lugdunum. Euseb. v. 1.

unusual clearness, and some extracts may serve to illustrate the temper of the social forces of the time. The Christians of the neighbourhood had been long exposed to insult and outrage in all public places; but at length the excitement grew to such a height that a furious mob began to pillage their houses and to drag the inmates off to trial. As they openly avowed their faith before the magistrates and people, they were shut up in prison for a time until the arrival of the Roman governor. As soon as they were brought before him he showed a spirit of ferocious enmity, resorted even to the torture to wring confession from the accused, and admitted, contrary to legal usage, the evidence of heathen slaves against their masters, till fear and malice caused them to be accused of "Thyestean banquets and Œdipodean incest." No age nor sex was spared meantime. Pothinus, the aged bishop of Lugdunum, was roughly dragged before his judge, and asked who was the Christians' God. He answered only, "If thou art worthy, thou shalt know." For this he was set upon and buffeted, and cast into a dungeon, where after two days his feeble body breathed its last. Blandina, a weak woman, was racked from morn till night, till the baffled gaolers grew weary of their horrid work, and were astonished that she was living still. But she recovered strength in the midst of her confession, and her cry, "I am a Christian, and there is no evil done among us," brought her refreshment in all the sufferings inflicted on her. As some of the accused were Roman citizens, proceedings were delayed till appeal could be directly made to Cæsar, and his will about the prisoners could be known. At length the imperial answer came, that those who recanted should be set free, but that all who persisted in their creed must die. Meantime many who had denied already, but were still kept

in bonds, were encouraged by the ardour of the true champions of the faith, and came forward to the governor's judgment seat to make a good confession, and to be sent by him, such as were citizens of Rome, to be beheaded, and all the rest to the wild beasts. Some, indeed, who had "no marriage garment" gave way to their fears; but the rest, "like noble athletes, endured divers contests, and gained great victories, and received the crown of incorruption." Last of all Blandina was again brought in along with Ponticus, a boy of about fifteen years of age. "These two had been taken daily to the amphitheatre to see the tortures which the rest endured, and force was used to make them swear by the idols of the heathen; but as they still were firm and constant, the multitude was furious against them, and neither pitied the boy's tender years, nor respected the woman's sex. They inflicted on them every torture, but failed to make them invoke their gods; for Ponticus, encouraged by his sister, after enduring nobly every kind of agony, gave up the ghost, while the blest Blandina, last of all, after having like a noble mother inspirited her children, trod the same path of conflict which her children trod before her, hastening on to them with joy at her departure, not as one thrown to the wild beasts, but as one invited to a marriage supper; . . . the heathens themselves acknowledging that never among them did woman endure so many and so fearful tortures."

We cannot read without emotion the story of these heroic martyrs; but it has, besides, this special interest for us, that it shows the persecution taking its rise, as usual, in the blind fury of the people, and encouraged also by local magistrates, provincial governors, and either by Marcus Aurelius himself, or by his representa-

tives at Rome, if the prince was too busy with the Marcomannic war. Yet for none of these can the excuse of ignorance be fairly pleaded. For Christianity had been long before the world; there was no mystery or concealment of its creed; its most distinctive features were confessed in the pages even of its hostile critics, and for some years past Apologists had been busy in doing battle with the prejudices of the people, and appealing to the enlightened judgment of the Cæsars.

Lucian's account of Peregrinus Proteus reflects some noble features of the early church.

Thus even the mocking Lucian, in a single page of his satiric medley, reflects the noble unworldliness of the young church, its enthusiastic hopes of a life beyond the grave, its generous spirit of sympathy and brotherhood, with the longing to have all things in common, which made it easily the dupe of sanctimonious impostors. He describes the life of such a clever rogue, under the name of Peregrinus Proteus, who after many a fraudulent device professed himself a convert, and soon rose to high repute among the Christians by his plausible eloquence and seeming zeal. From his energy he was singled out for persecution, thus winning admiration from the brethren as a confessor and a saint. While he was in prison they spared no trouble or expense to gain his freedom, and, failing in this, they were careful to provide for all his wants. From the dawn of day, old women, widows, and orphans might be seen standing at the prison doors; the chief members of the sect, having bribed the keepers, slept near him in the dungeon. They brought him all kinds of good cheer, and read the books of Scripture in his presence. Even from cities in Asia Minor came deputies from Christian societies to offer comfort and to plead his cause. . . "For nothing," says Lucian, "can exceed their eagerness in like cases,

or their readiness to give away all they have. Poor wretches! they fancy that they are immortal, and so they make light of tortures, and give themselves up willingly to death. Their first lawgiver has also caused them to believe that all of them are brothers. Renouncing, therefore, the gods of Greece, and adoring the Crucified Sophist whose laws they follow, they are careless of the goods of life and have them all in common, so entire is their faith in what he told them."

The attack of Celsus,

About the same time, probably, Celsus the philosopher devoted all his acuteness and his wit to an elaborate attack upon the Christian creed, and proved that he had made himself acquainted with the letter of its doctrines, though he had not the earnestness of heart to appreciate its spirit. His work is only known to us in the reply of Origen, but in the course of the objections urged and met, we have brought before us the chief aspects of the new morality. Thus, when he makes the Christians say, "Let no educated or wise man draw near, but whoever is ignorant, whoever is like a child, let him come and be comforted," he only states in taunting form the well-known paradox of the Gospel teaching; but in his protest at such ignorant faith he does not stay to ask how a religion which disowned, as he thought, appeal to reason, could give birth to the many heresies and varying sects on which he lays elsewhere such stress as a weak point in the Christian system. Again, though only as a hostile critic, he bears witness to its promises of peace and grace to the sinful and despairing conscience. "They," he says, "who bid us be initiated into the mysteries of other creeds begin by proclaiming, 'Let him draw near who is unstained and pure, who is conscious of no guilt, who has lived a good and upright life.' But let us hear the

invitation of these Christians. ' Whoever is a sinner,' they cry, ' whoever is foolish or unlettered, in a word, whoever is wretched, him will the kingdom of God receive.'" With this we may connect his comment on the subject of conversion: "It is clear that no one can quite change a person to whom sin has become a second nature, even by punishment, and far less then by mercy; for to bring about an entire change of nature is the hardest of all things." Celsus knew the chief points of the story of the life and character of Christ, but was unaffected by its moral grandeur. He had heard of humility as a marked feature of the Christian spirit, but it seemed to him a morbid growth, a perversion of the philosopher's ideal. He was familiar with the teaching of God's Providence, and of His fatherly care for every soul of man; but he thought it all a vain presumption, and the talk about the dignity of human nature and possibility of its redemption sounded but as idle and unmeaning words to one who was content with the idea of a Great Universe, evolving through unchanging laws an endless round of inevitable results.

In the next century Christianity found champions who were ready to meet such attack on its own ground, and to furbish for their use the weapons drawn from the armory of philosophic schools. But the Apologists of that age had other work to do. Accused as they had been as atheists, misanthropes, magicians, and sensualists of the worst type, the pressing need for them was to rebut such wanton slander, and to appeal to the imperial justice from the calumnies of ignorant malice. They were not like divines engaged on treatises of theological lore; but, writing face to face with the thought of speedy death, they turned to meet

answered in later days; the Apologists of this age had to deal more with practice than doctrine.

the danger of the moment, and dwelt on practice as well as on belief. In answer to the coarse falsehoods which were spread about their secret meetings, they described at length their doings in their Sunday gatherings—how they met to read the memoirs of the Apostles and the writings of the Prophets. "Then, when the reader ceases, the president exhorts to copy these good things. Then we rise up all together and offer prayers, and when we cease from prayer, bread is brought, and wine, and water, and the president offers prayers in like manner, and thanksgivings, and the people add aloud 'Amen,' and the sharing of those things for which thanks have been given takes place to everyone, and they are sent to those who are not present. Those who have means and goodwill give what they like, and the sum collected is laid up with the president, who in person helps orphans and widows, and all who are in need, and those who are in bonds, and those who have come from a strange land, and, in one word, he is guardian to all who are in need."

Justin, Apol. i. 67.

They were spoken of as evil-doers, and possibly so-called Christians might have been such—Gnostics, or heretics of questionable creeds—but if so, urged the writers, they could be no true followers of Him whose recorded words they quote, and whose influence in the past they point to as leading the hearts of men from hatred to love, from vice to virtue. Unsocial and morose they were not, though they must needs shun the forms of idol-worship and the gross offerings so unworthy of God's spiritual being. Magicians certainly they were not, and it was an idle taunt to say that the miracles of their Master were the mere works of magic art, for prophecy had long ago foretold them by the mouth of the holy men of God on

Their line of argument.

whom a large measure of the Divine Spirit must have rested. That Spirit or Eternal Logos was incarnate in its fulness only in Christ Jesus, though shared in some degree by the good men of heathen days, like Socrates or Plato. But the Greek sages were not able to persuade anyone to die for his belief, whereas their Master was obeyed by poor ignorant artisans and slaves, who proved the purity of their religious life by the manly courage of their death as martyrs. Great, however, as was their devotion to their heavenly Master, they had no lack of loyalty to Cæsar, for the kingdom to which Christ pointed was no earthly kingdom of material power; but their hopes and fears of a life beyond the grave were the surest sanctions of morality, and such wholesome restraints on evil-doers all wise governors must welcome. These were the main topics of the earliest Apologies, interspersed at times, now with attacks upon the heathen legends which sanctioned the very vices with which Christianity was falsely charged, and now with warnings against the malignant action of the demons who had by the allurements of idolatry seduced men from the worship of the living God, and who still made their potent influence felt in the outrages of persecution or the snares of heretical deceivers.

We know little but the names of any of the writers of this class before the time of Justin Martyr, and his story is mainly given us in his works, if we except the record of his martyrdom. Though born in a city of Samaria, he came seemingly of Gentile parents, and his attention was only drawn to Christianity when he saw how the believers could face the pains of death. "For I myself," he writes, "while an admirer of Platonic thought, heard the Christians spoken evil of; but

The life of Justin Martyr.

Justin, Ap. ii. 12.

when I saw them fearless in regard to death, and to all else that men think terrible, I began to see that they could not possibly be wicked sensualists. For what man who is licentious or incontinent would welcome death with the certainty of losing all that he enjoys? Would he not rather try to live on as before, and to shun the notice of the rulers, instead of giving information against himself which must lead to his death?" He had passed from one system to another of the ancient schools of thought, seeking from each sage in turn to learn the lessons of a noble life; but only when he heard of Christian truth was the fire lighted in his soul, and he knew that the object of his search was in his grasp, for the true philosophy was found at last. He tried to pass it on to other men, wearing as before the wandering scholar's mantle, and talked with men of every race about the questions of the faith.

His Apologies were addressed by him to the Antonines by name, with what effect we may best judge from the fact that he closed his missionary life by a martyr's death while Marcus Aurelius was on the throne; and we have reason to believe that his sentence was pronounced by Rusticus the Præfect, who owed his place of office to the monarch's gratitude for earlier lessons of morality.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STATE-RELIGION AND OF THE RITES IMPORTED FROM THE EAST.

After studying the progress and the dangers of the Christian church we may naturally ask what was the character of the national religion which it tended to dis-

place. An old inscription tells us that a vote of thanks was passed by the Roman Senate in honour of Antoninus Pius for his scrupulous care for all the ceremonial observances of public life. There was indeed no special reason why the Emperors of this age should be attached to the old forms of Roman worship. The families from which they sprung had been long resident in foreign lands; by taste or from necessity they passed much of their time far from the imperial city; their culture and the language even of their deepest thought was often Greek, and they had few ties of sentiment to bind them to the rites of purely Italic growth. But it had been part of the policy of Augustus to begin a sort of conservative reform in faith and morals, and to lead men to reverence more earnestly the religion of their fathers. His successors, wanton and dissolute as they often were, professed at least the same desire, and expressed it often in enduring shapes and costly ceremonials. The Emperors of the second century observed with more consistent care the same tradition, carried it even somewhat to extremes, as when they stamped upon their medals the legendary fancies of an early age, and linked the old poetic fictions to the associations of imperial rule; just as the literary fashion of their times tried to express its complexities of thought and feeling in the archaic rudeness of an ancient style.

The Emperors carefully respected the old forms of national religion,

The old religion of Italic growth was a very artless Nature worship, whose deities, with uncouth names, were cold abstractions of the reason, personified as yet by no poetic fancy. They were the sexless and mysterious agencies which presided over the processes of husbandry, the powers of stream and forest, and the sanctities of the domestic hearth. After a time, indeed, the exotic

growth of Hellenism overlaid the simple forms, which tended perhaps to disappear from the language and thought of educated men, but lingered on in country life, surviving even at the last the ruin of their more attractive rival. Among the earliest and most distinctive of the usages of natural religion were the observances of the *collegia* or confraternities which served as organized forms of an established worship. These priesthoods were still recruited seemingly with the same care as heretofore. The oldest families of Rome were represented in the Salii, among whom a future Emperor, as we have seen, was entered at an early age, and took pride in mastering the niceties of traditional practice; at the Lupercalia the half-naked priests still ran along the streets of Rome, using the time-honoured words and symbols; and the Arval Brothers went through their ceremonial round with formularies which had been unchanged for ages.

among the most distinctive of which were the customs of the *collegia* or priesthoods,

The last of these dated certainly from immemorial antiquity, for the foundation legend of the city enrolled the twins of Rhea in the then existing brotherhood. During the whole period of the Republic its prayers and offerings continued to express the hopes and fears of rural life, though history has passed it by with little notice. Even in imperial days, when liberal schemes of re-endowment, due probably to the policy of Augustus, had raised it in the social scale, we should know scarcely anything of the customs of its members if we were left only to the common literary sources. But a lucky accident has saved for us unusual stores of evidence. Year by year it was the practice to have careful minutes taken of their meetings and of all official acts, and to commit

such as that of the Arval Brothers,

them, not to frail materials or the custody of their own president, but to monumental characters engraved upon the walls of the temple where they met. Their holy place was not in Rome itself, but in a quiet grove five miles away, which in the course of ages has become a vineyard, while a humble cottage has replaced the shrine. Some of the stone slabs which lined the walls have been worked into the masonry of other buildings, till the letters graven on them have caught here or there some curious eyes. One such, of special value, containing the oldest form of an Italian liturgy, was found a century ago in a chapel of St. Peter's. Only a few years ago the Institute of Archæology at Rome resolved to explore the field in which the temple stood in search of further evidence. The scattered fragments of the stones were pieced together, and a long series of priestly archives, reaching from the days of Augustus to those of Gordian, reappeared at length as from the tomb.

the official registers of which still remain,

The accounts of the stated meetings and of many occasional gatherings are given with surprising fulness of detail, and by their help we gain an insight quite unique into much of the symbolic ritual and characteristic worship of the Romans. Brothers in name, and twelve in number, to correspond to the twelve lunar months in which the round of agricultural labour is completed, they were at first the spokesmen of the Latin husbandmen who offered prayer and thanksgiving for the prospects of a fruitful season; but in later days the noblest families of Rome were proud to figure on the list of a religious guild which reckoned at times an Emperor for its high-priest.

describing their ritual in full detail,

Its greatest festival came at the end of May, when the

first-fruits of the earth were gathered, and a blessing asked upon the works of coming harvest. Three days the holy season lasted. The first and third were kept at Rome, but the second must be spent among the scenes of rural life and the brooding sanctities of Nature. At early dawn the president passed out of the city walls to the Tetrastylum or Guildhall, enclosed in its four lines of colonnade. Robing himself here in his dress of state with purple stripe, he went at once to the entrance of the sacred grove, where he offered swine on one altar and a white heifer on a second, to appease the sylvan deities whose mysterious peace was to be that day disturbed. While the victims were roasting on the flames, the other priests were all assembling, and each in turn must enter his name on the official register; which done, they laid their robes aside and breakfasted upon the viands which were now ready on the altars. The hours that followed were given to repose in the cool shade, but at mid-day another service must begin. Robed in the dress of state, with ears of corn wreathed round their heads, they paced in ceremonial procession through the grove up to the central shrine where the lamb was offered on the altar. The wine and meal were sprinkled on the ground, the clouds of incense filled the air, and the jars of antique form which held the bruised meal of earlier days were exposed to reverent adoration in the shrine. Once more they issued from the doors, with censers in their hands, and offerings to the treasury, and libations poured from silver cups. Two priests were then despatched to gather the first-fruits from left to right through the whole company, and back again. Then with closed doors they touched the jars of meal, and murmured over each the solemn words of dedication,

especially at their great festival. Henzen Acta Frat. Arval.

and brought them out to be flung at last down the hill-side before the temple. The priests rested for a while upon their marble seats, and took from their servants' hands the rolls of bread bedecked with laurel leaves, and poured their unguents on the images around them. The laity must then withdraw; the doors were barred, while the priests girded their flowing dress about their loins, and took each his copy of the service books in which were written the old liturgies whose meaning no one present knew. The venerable chant was sung with the cadenced movements of the old Latin dance, and then the servants reappeared with garlands which were placed upon the statues of the gods. The solemn forms were at an end. The election of the president for another year was followed by the customary greetings (felicia), and the priests left the grove to rest in their own hall, and to dine in pomp after the labours of the day. The dinner over, they crowned themselves with roses and betook themselves with slippered feet to the amusements of the circus which were held close by, and closed the festival with a supper party in the high-priest's house at Rome.

In the proceedings of the Arval Brotherhood we may note three features which seem to characterise the national religion of the Romans.

We may note in their proceedings, 1st, their punctilious regard for ancient forms;

(1) Its punctilious regard for ancient forms may be read in every line of those old archives. The deity worshipped in that shrine was a nameless *Dea Dia* still, as in the days before Greek fancy made its way to Latium; the primitive religious dance (tripodiatus) was scrupulously observed; the rude instruments of barbarous ages were still used, though else unknown; the words of the chant they had to sing were so archaic that they could not trust their

memories without the book. The fear to employ any instruments of iron in the grove; the changes of dress and posture and demeanour; the careful entry in the registers of each stage in the long ceremonial service; these are examples of a Pharisaic care for outward usages which may be often found elsewhere in the history of symbolism, but which in this case seem to have passed at last into a stately picture language which spoke nothing to the reason and little to the heart.

(2) It had therefore little influence on man's moral nature, and scarcely touched the temper of his character or the practice of his workday life. For the most part the deities whom they adored had each his toll of offering and due respect, but did not claim to guide the will or check the passions. Ceremonial obedience might serve to disarm their jealousy or win their favour, and men need not look to any spiritual influence beyond. The priests had never been the social moralists of Rome; preaching and catechizing were unheard of; and the highest functionaries of religion might be and sometimes were men of scandalous life and notorious unbelief. The history of the Arval Brotherhood may help to illustrate the general truth. In the lists recorded in its archives may be found the names of many of the most profligate worldlings of imperial times, but very few of good repute. Court favour gave a title to the priesthood. Its practical concern was the enjoyment of good cheer, and the inscriptions carefully record the sum which was allotted for each banquet by the state, and the drinking cup which was put for every guest. One list of the year 37 tells us that the Emperor Caligula presided on the day of the great festival, and though he was too late to be present at the sacrifice, still he was there at least in time for dinner. Of

2nd, the absence of moral or spiritual influence;

the seven names which follow his, two were borne by noblemen of exceptionally immoral habits, a third is called by Tacitus of a self-indulgent nature, and not one displayed any great qualities in public life. Five out of the seven died a felon's death, or to escape it laid violent hands upon themselves.

(3) The Romans had their national worship, their church as established by the state. The priesthoods had been commonly faithful servants of the governing powers, and had never raised the cry of rights of conscience or of spiritual freedom. The Arval Brotherhood had certainly the temper of unquestioning loyalty. We need not, indeed, lay special stress upon the recurring usage of state prayers in which they joined at every opening year together with the whole official world; but it is curious to turn over the archives of the eventful year 69, in which four Emperors followed each other on the throne, and in which the Brothers took the oath of fealty to each with equal readiness, meeting one day under the presidency of their prince, and five days afterwards hailing the murderer as his successor. Sometimes they met to commemorate events of national importance, as in the days of festival for Trajan's Dacian victories. But besides this we have in the first century a whole series of days of thanksgiving and intercession connected chiefly with the fortunes of the imperial family, whose chiefs had been first patrons and then deities of the old guild. The Flavian dynasty and the Antonines were too sensible and modest to care much for such official flattery, and possibly they may have grudged the sums allotted to such a costly round of entertainments; so the meetings of the priests grew fewer, and the entries in the registers were rarer, save for the May festivals of early usage.

3rd, their loyalty to established powers of state.

The creed and ritual of ancient Rome were too cold and meagre and devoid of all emotional power to content the people's hearts. The luxuriant creations of Hellenic fancy, the stirring excitements of the Eastern worships, gradually came in to fill the void, till at last all the religions of the world found a home in the imperial city.

The old religion was too cold and meagre for men's wants,

The Greek colonists who early pushed their way along the coasts of southern Italy handed on the legends and the rites of Greece, which even in the regal period gained, through the Sibylline books, a footing in the state which literary influences constantly increased. As Rome's conquering arms were stretched forth to embrace the world, as strangers flocked to see the mistress of the nations, and slaves of every race were gathered within her walls, the names and attributes of foreign deities began to naturalize themselves almost of right, and to spread insensibly from aliens to Romans.

Polytheism has commonly a tolerant and elastic system. It seldom tries to impose its creed by force on other races, or to resist the worship of new gods as a dishonour to the old. Accustomed already to the thought of a multitude of unearthly powers, it has no scruple in adding to their number, and prefers to borrow the guardians of other races rather than force them to accept its own. So as land after land was added to the Empire, protection and honour were accorded to the forms of local worship, and all the subject nations were allowed to adore the objects of their choice. If any of them left their homes, they clung, of course, to the old rites, and might enjoy them undisturbed at Rome. It was, however, quite another thing to let them pass be-

and was supplemented by exotic creeds and rites,

yond the bounds both of country and of race, and to give them the sanction of the state as a form of the established faith of Rome. Still more so when the latest comers, who claimed to set up their altars and their temples in the streets, shocked the old-fashioned scruples of the ruling statesmen by their extravagance or sensual licence, or when it seemed that secret societies were spreading through the people under the cover of religious names. Then the government stepped in with force or menace, stamped out the Bacchanalia, for example, with terrible decision, and had the shrine of Isis levelled to the ground, though the consul's hand had to strike the first blow with the axe when meaner arms were paralysed with fear. Even after the days of the Republic, Augustus, who had shown honour to Serapis in his Egyptian home, forbade his worship on the soil of Italy. Yet these were only passing measures, ineffectual to stay the stream of innovation. On one pretext or another, the sanction of the state was given to the alien rites; a war or a pestilence was at times enough to excuse an appeal to some new tutelary power, and even to cause invitations to be sent to distant gods. As the sense of the imperial unity grew stronger, the distinction between the religious life of the centre and the provinces seemed more arbitrary and unmeaning; and though many a moralist of antique spirit gravely disapproved of the tone and temper of the eastern creeds, yet the rulers gradually ceased to put any check upon their spread, so long as each was satisfied to take his place beside the rest without intolerant aggression or defiance of the civil power.

which were only feebly opposed by the civil power,

There was, besides, another tendency which made it easier to enlarge the national Pantheon. Many a scruple was disarmed when men were told that the new-

comers were only the old familiar powers disguised in a new shape. Comparison had shown the likeness sometimes of usages and prayers in different lands, sometimes of the attributes assigned, or of the poetic fancies which had grown up in time round venerable names. Sincere believers felt a comfort in the thought that all the multitude of rival deities which seemed to have a claim on their respect consisted really of the many masks assumed by the same personal agencies, or were even separate qualities of the One Heavenly Father. Plutarch, priest of the Pythian Apollo and a devout adherent of the old religion of his fathers, yet wrote a treatise on the gods of Egypt in which he tried to prove that they were in truth only the gods of Greece, worshipped with mysterious rites and somewhat weird suggestions of the fancy, which, however, found a counterpart at home in the native outgrowths of the Hellenic mind. The truth which the figurative language of their ritual shadowed forth was one expressed in many another symbol; the powers of heaven were well content that men should read it, and would yield their secrets with a good grace to the earnest seeker. He felt, therefore, the more attracted to the mystic obscurity of that old culture of the Pharaohs, of which the Sphinxes were the aptest tokens, certain as he was that all its riddles might be read, and would yield an harmonious and eternal truth.

and were welcomed by devout minds such as Plutarch

Plutarch never doubted of the personal existence of the beings whom he adored, and never resolved them into mere abstractions. Others there were with piety no less real than his, who regarded all the forms of popular religion as useful in their various degrees, but as all alike adequate to express the truths which were ineffable. "Doubtless,"

and Maximus Tyrius, Diss. viii. 10.

says one of them, "God the Father and Creator of the Universe is more ancient than the sun or heavens, is greater than time, superior to all that abides and all that changes. Nameless He is, and far away out of our ken; but as we cannot grasp in thought His being, we borrow the help of words, and names, and animals, and figures of gold and ivory; of plants and streams, and mountain heights and torrents. Yearning after Him, yet helpless to attain to Him, we attribute to Him all that is most excellent among us. So do the lovers who are fain to contemplate the image of the persons whom they love; who fondly gaze at the lyre or dart which they have handled, or the chair on which they sat, or anything which helps to bring the dear one to their thoughts. Let us only have the thought of God. If the art of Phidias awakens this thought among the Greeks; if the worship of animals does the like for the Egyptians; if here a river and there the fire does the same, it matters little. I do not blame variety. Only let us know God and love Him; only let us keep His memory abiding in our hearts."

In place of the matter-of-fact and ceremonious religion of the Latin farmers, we may trace in course of time new thoughts and feelings roused to play their part in a rich variety of spiritual moods. We may trace the mystic reveries and ecstatic visions such as those which convent life has often nursed in pious souls of later times, where the fancy, living overmuch in the world of the unseen, loses its sense of the reality and due proportions of the things of earth. We hear of sensitive and enthusiastic natures who see so clearly the special providence which broods over their lives, and feel so keenly love and gratitude for all the mercies given to them, that they speak of themselves as the elect predestined to the favour

of heaven. They feel the workings of God's spirit in their hearts; they see in every turn of life the traces of His guiding hand, and airy visitants from other worlds look in upon them in their dreams.

Such a one was the rhetorician Aristides, who, after suffering for long years from a malady which none could cure, devoted himself to the service of the god Asclepius (whom the Latins called Æsculapius), living mainly in his temple with his priests, seeing him in visions of the night, following implicitly the warnings sent in sleep, and falling into trances of unspeakable enjoyment.

and Aristides, who was full of mystic reveries and visions.

Proud of the privileges of his special revelation, he wrote out in impassioned style his *sacred sermons*, published, as he said, at the dictation of his heavenly patron. He told the story of his ecstatic moods, of the promised recovery of strength which followed in due course, of the deliverance from instant danger vouchsafed to him at the great earthquake of Smyrna, of the comfort of the abiding presence of a saving Spirit, and his thankfulness for the old trial of sickness which brought him to the notice of a protector so benign.

Mystic aspirations point to the hope of a closer union with the Divine than the trammels of our common life

New moods of ecstatic feeling,

allow. To rise above these limitations, to lose the sense of personal being, and almost indeed of consciousness, in the pulsations of a higher life—to this the enthusiasm of devotion points in many a different name and race. Most commonly, with this end in view, the soul would keep the body under and starve it with ascetic rigour, while the spirit beats against its prison bars, panting for a freer and purer air. Examples of such austerity of self-denial may be also found in heathen times; weary jour-

neyings to holy places visited by countless pilgrims, who must be meanly fed and hardly lodged if they would hope to gain the gladness of the beatific vision. Recluses too there were in Egypt, giving their lives without reserve to holy meditation, and hoping to draw nearer to their God by wellnigh ceasing to be men. More frequently they had recourse to the influence of highwrought feeling, to the electric sympathies by which strong waves of passion sweep across excited crowds, and carry them beside themselves in transports of enthusiasm. By the wild dance and maddening din, by fleshly horrors self-imposed, or the orgies of licentious pleasure, by vivid imagery to make the illusion of the fancy more complete, they worked upon the giddy brain and quivering nerves, till the excited votaries of Isis or Adonis passed beyond the narrow range of everyday life into the frenzy of religious ecstacy and awe.

self-denial,

excitement,

In the early Roman creed there was little room for the hopes or fears of a life to come. But there is a yearning in the mind to pierce the veil which hides the future from the sight, and many a prophecy was brought from other lands, couched in hopeful or in warning tones, here darkly hinted in enigmas, here loudly proclaimed in confidence outspoken, there acted in dramatic forms before the kindling fancy as in the ancient mysteries of Greece, or in more questionable shapes in the ritual of Eastern creeds.

Another influence was brought to bear on Western thought in the deeper sense of sinfulness, as the pollution of the guilty soul and an outrage on the majesty of God. With this came in natural course the greater influence of the priests, to whom the stricken conscience turned in its bewilder-

and mystic gloom,

ment or its despair. For they alone could read with confidence the tokens of the will of heaven, they alone knew the forms of intercession or atonement which might bring peace by promises of pardon. No longer silent ministers engaged in the mere round of outward forms as servants of the state; they wandered to and fro to spread the worship of their patron saints, sometimes with the fervour of devoted faith, sometimes working on men's hopes and fears to gain a readier sale for their indulgences and priestly charms, sometimes like sordid mountebanks and jugglers catering for the wonder-loving taste of credulous folks by sleight of hand and magic incantations.

are encouraged by the religions of the East.

Among the most striking of such innovations due to the spread of Oriental symbolism was the costly rite of *taurobolium*, in which recourse was had to the purifying influence of blood. Known to us chiefly by inscriptions, of which the earliest dates from the reign of Hadrian, we have reason to believe that the usage came from Asia as a solemn sacrifice in honour of the Phrygian Mother of the Gods. From Southern Italy it passed to Gaul, and in the busy town of Lugdunum (Lyons), the meeting-point of traders of all races, it was celebrated with more than common pomp. It was the more impressive from its rarity, for so great seemingly was the cost of the arrangements, that only the wealthy could defray it. Corporations, therefore, and town-councils came forward to undertake the burden, when dreams and oracles and priestly prophecies had expressed the sovereign pleasure of the goddess. Ceremonies on such a scale could be held only by the sanction of the ruling powers, and it would seem that an official character was given to the

The striking observance of the *taurobolium*.

rites by the presence of the magistrates in robes of state. The crowning act of a long round of solemn forms was the slaughter of the bull itself, from which the whole rite had drawn its name. The votary in whose behalf the offering was made descended with silken dress and crown of gold into a sort of fresh-dug grave, above which planks were spread to hold the bull and sacrificing priest. As the blow fell upon the victim's neck, the streams of blood which came pouring from the wound flowed through the chinks and fittings of the wood, and bathed the worshipper below. From the cleansing virtue of the blood, he became henceforth spiritually regenerate (in æternum renatus), and at the time an object almost of adoration to the gazing crowds. We need not wonder that the writers of the early church indignantly opposed such heathen rites, which seemed to them a hideous caricature of the two great topics of their faith, Christian Baptism and Redemption.

It would be too much to say perhaps that any of the thoughts and feelings naturalised in later days at Rome were wholly new and unfamiliar. In weaker moods, in rudimentary forms, they may be traced in the religion of the earliest days, and so too even the outer forms of worship, the mystic rites and orgies had their counterparts in ancient Rome. Some scope was given from the first to sacerdotal claims, some priestly functions had been claimed by women, which made it easier in later times for priests to gain ascendancy, and women to play so large a part in the religion of the Empire. But the Eastern influence gave intensity of life to what before was faint and unobtrusive. It vivified the unseen world which was vanishing away before the practical materialism of the Roman mind. It

The newcomers were content to live side by side in peace in the imperial Pantheon.

coloured and animated with emotional fervour the pale and rigid forms of social duties. It was the informing spirit which was new, and this could pass into any of the multitudinous creeds which now lived side by side in peace. They could and did compete for popular favour, without bitterness or rancour in their rivalry; and the priests of one deity could be votaries of another, believing, as they often did, that the same Power was worshipped under different disguises of nationality and language. Each took its place within the imperial Pantheon, without the hope or wish to displace others. Two systems only proudly stood aloof—the Jewish Synagogue, whose energies were centred in the work of explaining and commenting on its Sacred Books; the Christian church – which was turning from its fond hopes of the speedy fulfilment of its kingdom of heaven, to engage in a struggle of life and death, in which all the iron discipline and social forces of the Empire stood arrayed against it, while it was armed only with the weapons of mutual kindliness and earnest faith and inextinguishable hope.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LITERARY CURRENTS OF THE AGE.

THE period of the Antonines abounded with libraries and schools and authors, with a reading public, and all the outward tokens of an educated love of letters. Never has there been more enthusiasm for high culture, more careful study of the graces of a literary style, more critical acquaintance with good models, more interchange of sympathy between professors

The wide-spread enthusiasm for learning, but want of creative power.

of the different schools; and yet there were but scanty harvests from all this intellectual husbandry. There was no creative thought evolved, no monument of consummate art was reared, no conquest of original research achieved.

The *scribendi cacoethes*, the mania for scribbling, poured forth vast quantities of literary matter; but most of it fell at once still-born, and much of what remains has little value for us now, save to illustrate the conditions of the times. The men are of more interest to us than their works. There was colour and variety in the features of their social status; there were curious analogies to the history of later days; but we are likely to gather from their writings rather a series of literary portraits, than ideas to enrich the thought and fancy, or models of art to guide our taste.

The culture of the age was mainly Greek. Hellenic influence had spread long since far into the East. Among the populous towns of Asia Minor it ruled entirely without a rival; it had pushed its way through Syria, and almost to the line of the Euphrates; while it held many an outpost of civilized life in the colonies planted long ago among the ruder races of the North. Through all of these the liberal studies were diffused, and in their schools the language of Demosthenes was spoken with little loss of purity and grace. From them, as well as from Athens and her neighbours, came the instructors who taught the Western world; from them came the newest literary wares, and the ruling fashions of the season; and even in countries such as Gaul, where Rome had stamped so forcibly the impress of her language and her manners, scholars who hoped for influence beyond a narrow local circle, often wrote and thought in Greek, as

The culture of the age was mainly Greek,

the speech of the whole civilized world. The old Roman tongue grew rapidly more feeble and less pure, with few exceptions the learned declined to write in it, and an Emperor, as we have seen, even in the memoirs written for no eye save his own, expressed his deepest thoughts and feelings not in Latin but in Greek.

and professorial.

The career of a man of letters was chiefly professorial, and his works were meant more for the ear than for the eye. His sphere of action commonly was found in lectures, conferences, public readings, panegyrics, debates, and intellectual tournaments of every kind. For the scholars of those days were not content to stay at home and be prophets to their countrymen alone, or to trust to written works to spread their fame; but they travelled far away from land to land, and ever as they went they practised their ready wit and fluent tongue. Like their prototypes in earlier days, the rivals of Socrates and the objects of the scorn of Plato, they were known by the old name of Sophist, which implied their claim to be learned if not to be wise, and the term was used without reproach of the most famous of their number, whose lives were written by Philostratus. Citizens of the world, and self-styled professors in the widespread university of culture, they found full liberty of speech and an eager audience in every town. For though the times were changed many of the habits of the old Republic lingered still; and though the stormy debates of politics were silenced, and the thunders of the orators of old were heard no more, still the art of public speech was passionately prized, and men were trained even from their childhood to study the grace and power of language, and to crave some novel form of intellectual stimulus.

So when the travelling Sophist was heard of in their

midst, the townsmen flocked with curious ears about the stranger, as the crowd gathered around Paul upon Mars' Hill, eager to hear and tell of some new thing. Sometimes it was a scholar of renown who came with a long train of admirers, for young and old went far afield in search of knowledge, and attached themselves for years to a great teacher, like the students of the middle ages who passed in numbers from one famous university of Europe to another, attracted by the name of some great master. Then the news passed along the streets, and time and place were fixed for a lecture of display; the magistrates came in state to do the speaker honour, and even an Emperor at times deigned to look in, and set the example of applause with his own hands. Sometimes a young aspirant came in quest of laurels, to challenge to a trial of skill the veteran whose art was thought by his countrymen to be beyond compare. Sometimes came one with all the enthusiasm of a new-found truth, to maintain some striking paradox, to advocate a moral system, or some fresh canon of literary taste. Like the great schoolmen of the age of Dante, or the Admirable Pico of a later time, they posted up the theses which they would hold against all comers, and were ready in their infinite presumption to discourse of all the universe of thought and being (de omni scibili et ente), and when weary of the sameness of the scholar's life wandered like knights errant round the world in search of intellectual adventures. Sometimes it was a poor vagrant with a tattered mantle, who gathered a crowd around him in the streets, and declaimed with rude energy against the luxury and wantonness of the life of cities, bidding men look within them for the sources of true happiness and worthy manhood. Like the preaching

The various classes of Sophists

friars of the Christian church, they appealed to every class without distinction, startling the careless by their examples of unworldliness, and striking them often on the chords of higher feeling, as they spoke to the rich and noble in the plain language of uncourtly warning. Yet often the Cynic's mantle was only a disguise for sturdy beggars, disgusting decent folks by their importunate demands, and dragging good names and high professions through the mire of sensuality and lust.

The name of Sophist was applied in common speech to two great classes, which, rivals as they were for popular esteem, and scornful as was each of the pretensions of the other, were yet alike in many of the features of their social life, and were scarcely distinguished from each other by the world.

falling under the main divisions of, 1° moralists and philosophers,

The first included the professional moralists and high thinkers, who claim to have a rule of active life or a theory of eternal truth which might be of infinite value to their fellow-men. Philosophy had somewhat changed its aims and methods since the great systems of original inquiry had parted the schools of Greece among them. The old names, indeed, of Platonist and Peripatetic, Epicurean and Stoic, still were heard; but the boundary lines were growing fainter, and the doctrines of each were losing the sharpness of their former outlines. Philosophy had lost the keenness of her dialectic, the vigour and boldness of her abstract reasoning; she had dropped her former subtlety, and was spending all her energy of thought and action on the great themes of social duty. She aspired, and not quite in vain, to be the great moral teacher of mankind. She stepped into the place which heathen religion long had left unfilled,

and claimed to be the directress of the consciences of men. When the old barriers were levelled to the ground; when natural law, and local usages, and traditional standards became effaced or passed away before the levelling action of the imperial unity; when servile flattery began to abdicate the claims of manhood, and to acknowledge no source of law and right but the caprices of an absolute monarch, philosophy alone began on sure foundations to raise the lines of moral order, philosophy alone was heard to plead in the name of dignity and honour. She left the shadow of the schools, the quiet groves of Academe, the Gardens, and the Porch, and came out into the press and throng of busy life under every variety of social guise. She furnished her lecturers of renown, holding chairs with endowments from the state, and speaking with the authority of men of science. She had her spiritual advisers for great houses, living like domestic chaplains in constant attendance on the wealthy and well-born. There were father confessors for the ruler's ear, rivalling in influence the ladies of the imperial household. There were physicians of the soul, who had their little social circles of which they were the oracles, guiding the actions of their friends, sometimes by confidential letters, sometimes by catechetical addresses, while at times their familiar table talk was gathered up for private use in the diaries of admiring pupils. Missionaries travelled in her name from town to town, with hardy courage and unvarnished phrase, like the Mendicant Friars of later days, speaking to the people mainly in the people's tongue, and denouncing the lust of the eye and the pride of life in the spirit of Christian ascetics.

The greatest among the heathen moralists of the age was Epictetus. The new bought slave, for that is the

such as Epictetus,

meaning of the only name by which history knows him, early exchanged his Phrygian home for the mansion of a Roman master, who seems to have been a vulgar soul, cringing to the powerful and haughty to the weak, and who treated him probably with little kindness, even if he did not, as one version of the story runs, break his slave's leg in a freak of wanton jest. Yet, strange as it may seem, his master sent the lame and sickly youth to hear the lessons of the most famous of the Stoic teachers, intending him, perhaps, for literary labour because he was too weak for other work. The pupil made good use of the chances offered him; and when in after years he gained his freedom, he ruled his life in all things by the system of his choice, proving in the midst of his patient, brave, and unobtrusive poverty how fully he had mastered all the doctrines of the Porch. No cell of Christian monk was ruder than his simple bedroom, of which the only furniture was a pallet bed and iron lamp, and when the latter was taken by a thief, it was replaced by one of clay.

Epictetus wrote no works, and made no pretence in public as a sage; but he talked freely to his friends, and admirers gathered round him by degrees to hear his racy earnest sermons on one moral question or another, and some made notes of what he said, and passed them on in their own circles, till his fame at last spread far and wide beyond the range of personal acquaintance. Arrian, his devoted friend, has left us two such summaries; one a Manual of his Rule of Life, couched in brief and weighty words, as of a general to his soldiers under fire; the second, a sort of Table Talk, which, flowing on with less dogmatic rigour, found tenderer and more genial tones to speak to the hearts of those who heard him. He eschewed all subtleties of metaphysics, all show of par-

adox or literary graces; his thoughts are entirely transparent and sincere, expressed in the homeliest of prose, though varied now and then by bursts of rude eloquence and vivid figures of the fancy. In them the whole duty of man, according to the Stoic system, is put forth in the strongest and most consistent form; and as such, they were for centuries the counsellors and guides of thousands of self-centred resolute natures.

To bear and to forbear in season, to have a noble disregard for all the passing goods of fortune, and all which we cannot ourselves control; to gain an absolute mastery over will and temper, thought and feeling, which are wholly in our power—to make Reason sit enthroned within the citadel of Self, and let no fitful gusts of passion, no mere brute instincts guide our action—these in bare outline are the dogmas of a creed which insists as few have ever done upon the strength and dignity of manhood. True, there are harsh words at times, full of a stern, ascetic rigour, as when he bids men not to grieve for the loss of friend, or wife, or child, and to let no foolish pity for the ills of any whom he loves cloud the serenity of the sage's temper. Rebuking grief, he needs must banish love, for grief itself is only love which feels the lack of what is torn away, and without sympathy to stir us from our moods of lonely selfishness we should be merely animals of finer breed and subtler brain.

But Epictetus could not trample out all feeling; he rises even to a height of lyric fervour when he speaks of the providence of God, of the moral beauty of His works, and the strange insensibility of ungrateful men. Nor would he have his hearers rest content with the selfish hope of saving their own souls; rather, he would have them ever think of the human brotherhood, and live not for themselves but for the world. He falls into a vein of

Christian language when he speaks of the true philosopher as set apart by a special call, anointed with the unction of God's grace to a missionary work of lifelong self-devotion, as the apostle of a high social creed. Unconsciously, perhaps, he holds up the mirror to himself in this description, and the rich colouring and impassioned fervour of the chapter redeem the austerity of his moral system.

The substance of some passages may serve perhaps to complete the brief sketch of his character and thought. When asked to describe the nature of the ideal Cynic, he said that heaven's wrath would light on him who intruded rashly into a ministry so holy. It called for an Agamemnon to lead a host to Troy; none but Achilles could face Hector in the fight; if a Thersites had presumed to take that place, he would have been thrust away in mockery or disgrace. So let the would-be Cynic try himself, and count the cost before he starts for the campaign. To wear a threadbare cloak is not enough: something more is needed than to live hardly—to carry staff and wallet, and to be rude and unmannerly to all whose life seems too luxurious or self-indulgent. It were an easy matter to do this. But to keep a patient, uncomplaining temper, to root out vain desire and rise above the weakness of anger, jealousy, pity, and every carnal appetite, to make the sense of honour take the place of all the screens or safeguards of door and inner chamber, to have no secrets to conceal, no shrinking fear of banishment or death, in the confidence of finding everywhere a home where sun and moon will shine, and communion will be possible with heaven—this is not an easy thing, but to be able to do this is to be a philosopher indeed. Thus furnished for the work of life, the true Cynic will feel that he has a mission to

Diss. iii. 22.

be a preacher of the truth to erring men who know so little of what is really good or evil. He is sent as a seer to learn the path of safety, and as a prophet to warn his fellow-men of all their dangers. It is for him to tell them the secret of true happiness, that it does not lie in the comfort of the body, nor in wealth, nor high estate, nor office, nor in anything which lies exposed to the caprice of chance, but only in the things which fall within the range of man's freewill, in his own domain of thought and action.

Men ask indeed if any can be happy without the social blessings which they prize. It is for the apostle of philosophy to show that, homeless, childless, wifeless wanderer though he be, with only a mantle on his body and the sky above his head, he can yet enjoy entirest freedom from all anxiety and fear, and from all the misery of a fretful temper. But let no one rashly fancy that he is called to such a life without weighing well its duties and its dangers. Let him examine himself well, and learn the will of God whose messenger he would claim to be. Outraged and buffeted he may be, like a poor beast of burden ; but he must love his persecutors as his brethren. For him there can be no appeal to Cæsar or to Cæsar's servants, for he looks only to his Sovereign in heaven, and must bear patiently the trials which He sends him. In a realm of perfect sages there would be no call into the mission-field, and all might innocently enjoy the pleasures of home life in peace. But that soldier serves most cheerfully who has no cares of wife or household, and the Cynic who has felt the call to do God's work must forswear the blessings of the life of husband or of father, must rise above the narrower range of civic duties, remembering that all men are his brothers and his city is the world.

Yet large as is the call upon his self-denial, he should not aim at needless austerity or ascetic gloom. There is no sanctity in dirt or vermin, nothing to win souls or to attract the fancy in emaciated looks and a melancholy scowl; nor is there any reason why the missionary must be a beggar. Epictetus saw no merit in hardships self-imposed, nor would he have men turn from pleasure as from a traitor offering a kiss; only he would have them able to part cheerfully with all save truth and honour, in the spirit of pilgrims on the march. "As on a journey, when the ship is lying at anchor, thou mayest land to take in water, and gather shells and the like upon the shore, but must keep the vessel still in view, and when the steersman beckons, must leave all else at once to come on board: so, too, in life's pilgrimage, if wifelet or little one be given thee for a while, it may be well, but to see to it that thou art ready, when the pilot calls, to go at once, and turn not to look back."

(c. vii).

The life of Dion Chrysostom may serve to illustrate still further the ideal of the philosophic propaganda of these times. He was, indeed, no Stoic by profession, and did not use heroic tones; yet like the sage pictured to our fancy in the strong words of Epictetus, he felt that he was called to spend his life unselfishly for others, and to preach and plead to every class in the enthusiasm of a religious duty. He only gradually awoke, indeed, to the sense of his vocation, and it is curious to read his own account of his conversion to philosophy, and note his confessions of unworthiness.

and Dion Chrysostom.

Driven by a popular riot from his home at Prusa, in which town he had already filled the highest offices, he betook himself to Rome, where he gained a name by

eloquence, and the hatred of Domitian by outspoken satire. He fled away and lived a wandering life, in the course of which, as we have seen already (p. 6), he appeased a mutiny among the legions when the news of the tyrant's murder reached their camp upon the northern frontier. During those years of banishment he hid his name but could not hide his talents; his threadbare cloak was taken for a Cynic's mantle, and men often came to him to ask for counsel. His quibbles of rhetoric availed him little for cases of conscience such as these, and he was driven to meditate in earnest on great themes of duty, and seek for truth at the sources of a higher wisdom. With light so gained he saw the vanity of human wishes, he felt the littleness of his earlier aims, and resolved to devote his eloquence to a higher cause than that of personal ambition. He would spend himself for the needs of every class without distinction, and tend the anxious or despairing as the physician of their souls, regretting only that so few care for serious thought in the season of prosperity, and fly to the sage for ghostly counsel only when loss of friends or dear ones makes them feel the need of consolation.

The details of his life and character are known to us chiefly by his works, some of which are moral essays, sermons, as it were, on special texts which might be preached to any audience alike, while others are set speeches made in public as occasion called him forth in many a far-off city where he sojourned in his wandering career. In the former class we note that among all the commonplaces of the schools, high thoughts may be met with here and there, full of a large humanity, and with an entirely modern sound. In a world whose social system rested on a basis of slave labour, he raised his voice not merely to plead for kindliness and mercy, but

to dispute the moral right of slavery itself. Feeling deeply for the artisan and peasant, whose happiness was sacrificed, and whose social status was degraded by the haughty sentiment of Greece and Rome, he spoke in accents seldom heard before of the dignity and prospects of industrial labour. His account of the shipwrecked traveller in Eubœa gives us a picture, else unequalled in its vividness, of the breach between the city and the country life, and of the uncared-for loneliness of much of the rural population.

But the second class of writings best reflects the temper and activity of Dion's efforts to bring philosophy to bear upon the world. They show him as the advocate of peace, stepping in with words of timely wisdom to allay the bitterness of long-standing feuds, or the outbreak of fresh jealousies such as had lingered for centuries among the little states of the Ægean, and survived even the tutelage of Roman power. At one time the subject of dispute is the scene of the provincial courts, at another the proud title of metropolis of Asia; at another some infinitely petty right of fisheries or of pasture. Quarrels such as these brought citizens of rival towns into collision in the streets, and led to interchange of passionate complaints, wearying out the patience of their Roman masters by the vanity and turbulence of these Greek republics. All Dion's tact and all his eloquence were needed in such cases, to enforce the eternal principles of concord and forbearance by the dexterous use of personal appeals. He shows his sense of the importance of this work by speaking with a sort of fervour of the holy functions of this ministry of reconciliation.

He was jealous of his dignity and independence, stooping to truckle neither to the violence of mob-licence

nor to the caprices of a monarch. He startled the dissolute populace of Alexandria by his bold defiance of their wanton humour, and by his skilful pleading to have the claims of philosophy respected. He bore himself with courteous firmness in the presence of the Court, and lectured Trajan on the duties of a royal station without any loss of honest frankness or imperial favour. He preached on the vanity of human glory, and was one day to prove in his own person how treacherous and unsubstantial a thing it is. The cities which had honored him as their teacher and their friend were presently to grow weary of his counsels, and to show him the indignity of setting another head upon his statues. Prusa his birthplace, and the object of his special tenderness, was to turn against him in blind fury, and to denounce him to the Roman governor as a traitor and a thief.

To the vicissitudes of the career of Dion we may find a striking contrast in the unbroken calm of Plutarch's life. Descended from an ancient family of the Bœotian Chæroneia, after drawing from the sources of ancient art and learning at their fountain head at Athens, he betook himself in riper years to Rome, where, besides attending to the duties with which he seems to have been charged in the service of his fellow-townsmen, he lectured publicly from time to time, and made good use of the literary stores amassed in the great libraries, and of the interchange of thought in the cultivated circles of the capital. In the vigour of his intellectual manhood he went back to Chæroneia, where he lived henceforth, for fear, he says, that the little town should lose in him a single citizen; serving with honourable zeal in the whole round of civil and religious offices, and winning the respect of all his neighbours as well as of many correspondents from abroad.

Plutarch.

Full of the generous patriotism of the best days of Greece, he gave his time and thought without reserve to the service of his countrymen, though he allowed no glamour of ancient sentiment to cloud his judgment. He told the young aspirants round him that, when they read the harangues of Pericles and the story of their old republics, they must be careful to remember that those times were gone for ever, and that they must speak with bated breath in their assemblies, since the power had passed into the hands of an imperial governor. It was idle to be like the children at their play, who dress themselves as grown-up folks, and put on their fathers' robes of state. And yet the worthy citizen, he says, has no lack of opportunities for action. To keep open house, and so to be a harbour of refuge for the wanderers, to sympathise with joy and grief, to be careful not to wound men's feelings by the wantonness of personal display; to give counsel freely to the unwary, to bring parted friends once more together, to encourage the efforts of the good and frustrate the villany of designing knaves, to study, in a word, the common weal, these are the duties which a citizen can discharge until his dying day, whether clothed or not with offices of state.

For Plutarch did not write merely as a literary artist to amuse a studious leisure or revive the memory of heroic days, but as a moralist invested by public confidence with a sort of priesthood to direct the consciences of men. He had, indeed, no new theory of morals to maintain, and made no pretension to original research; he wished not to dazzle but to edify, to touch the heart and guide the conduct rather than instruct the reason. His friends or neighbours come to him for counsel on one or other of life's trials, and he sends them willingly the fruit of his study or reflection. He

holds his conferences like a master of the schools, and the privileged guests flock willingly to hear the sermons of which the subject has already been announced, and listen with becoming gravity to the exhortations of the sage. Sometimes they are invited to propose a question for debate; but nothing frivolous can be allowed, nor may any of the audience betray an unseemly lack of interest, "like the bidden guest who scarcely touches with his lips the viands which his host has spread before him." The listener's mind must be ever on the alert, "as the tennis player watches for the ball," and he never should forget that he is sitting, not like a lounger at the theatre, but in a school of morals where he may learn to regulate his life. The lecture ended, or the public conference closed, the privileged few remain to discuss the subject further with their master, while here or there a stricken conscience stays behind to confess its secret grief and ask for ghostly admonition. But the teacher's doors are ever open; all may freely come and go who need encouragement or advice on any point of social duty. Out of such familiar intercourse, and the cases of conscience thus debated, grew the treatises of ethics which, read at Rome and Athens as well as in the little town of Chæroneia, extended to the world of letters the fruits of his ministry of morals.

He did not always wait to be applied to, but sought out at times the intimates who seemed to need his counsels, watched their conduct with affectionate concern, and pressed in with warning words amid the business of common life. He tried to recommend philosophy not by precept only but by practice, first testing on himself the value of his spiritual drugs, and working with humility for the salvation of his soul. "It was for the good of others," he tells us, "that I first began to write the

biographies of famous men, but I have since taken to them for my own sake. Their story is to me a mirror, by the help of which I do my best to rule my life after the likeness of their virtues. I seem to enter into living communion with them; while bidding them welcome one by one under the shelter of my roof, I contemplate the beauty and the grandeur of the souls unbared before me in their actions."

Yet it was not without other reasons that he lingered over these old passages of history and romance. For, indeed, with all his width of sympathy and his large humanity, the mind of Plutarch was cast in an antique mould. At home mainly in the world of books or in the social moods of a petty town of Greece, he knew little of the new ideas which were then leavening the masses. The Christian church, meantime, was setting the hearts of men aglow with the story of a noble life which could find no sort of parallel in his long list of ancient worthies. Dion Chrysostom had dared to call the right of slavery in question, and spoke as feelingly as any modern writer of the sorrows of the proletariate and the dignity of labour. Marcus Aurelius was soon to show what delicate humility and unselfish grace could blossom in the midst of heathendom, while straining after visions of perfection not to be realized in scenes of earth. But Plutarch's thought in religion and in morals seems scarcely to have passed beyond the stage of human progress reached long ago in Plato's days, and five centuries had passed away and taught him no new principle of duty.

He believed in the unity of God, and saw the vanity of idol worship; but to him the essence of religion lay not in dogmas or rules of life, but in solemn ritual. He clung to the edifying round of holy forms, though the

faith to which they ministered of old was swept away, and though he had to people the unseen world with intermediate spirits, and freely resort to allegoric fancy, to justify the whole mythology of Greek religion.

In morals his ideal is confined to the culture and perfection of the personal aspirant; and amiable and chastened as are his tones of courtesy, his talk is still of happiness rather than of duty, and his spiritual horizon is too narrow to take in the thought of the loathsomeness of evil and the enthusiasm of charity. His calm serenity reminds us of the temples of old Greece, which attain in all that is attempted to a simple grace and a consummate art, with none of the gloom and mystery of a Christian cathedral, and with little of its witness to a higher world and its vision of unfulfilled ideals.

But most of the scholars of the day made no pretensions to such earnest thought, and shrunk from philosophy as from a churlish Mentor who spoke a language harsh and discordant in their ears. These were literary artists, word-fanciers, and rhetoricians, whose fluent speech and studied graces won for them oftentimes a world-wide fame, and raised them to wealth or dignity, but did not add a single thought to the intellectual capital of their age, and left behind no monument of lasting value.

2°. The literary artists and rhetoricians

They studied the orators of earlier days to learn the secrets of their power; but the times were changed since the party-strife of the republican assemblies had stirred into insanity the stateman's genius and passion. The pleadings even of the law courts were somewhat cold and lifeless when all the graver cases were sent up by appeal before the Emperor or his servants. They tried, indeed, to throw themselves back into the past, to reopen the debates of history, and galvanize into spasmodic

life the rigid skeletons of ancient quarrels. When men grew weary of these worn-out topics, the lecturers had recourse to paradox to quicken afresh the jaded fancy, startling the curiosity by some unlooked-for theme, writing panegyrics on Fever and Baldness, Dust and Smoke, the Fly even and the Gnat, or imagining almost impossible conjunctures to test their skill in casuistry or their fence of subtle dialectic. To others the subject mattered little. Like the Isæus of whom Pliny writes admiringly, or the *improvisatori* of a later age, they left the choice to the audience who came to hear them, and cared only to display the stock of images with which their memory was furnished, their power of graceful elocution in which every tone or gesture had artistic value, or their unfailing skill in handling all the arms of logical debate.

Sometimes it was a question merely of the choice of words. The Greeks commonly were faithful to the purer models of good style; but the Roman taste, not content with the excellence of Cicero as approved by Quintilian's practised judgment, mounted higher for its standards of Latinity, and prided itself on its familiar use of archaic words or phrases gleaned from Cato or from Ennius. The harmonious arrangement of these borrowed graces was in itself a proof of eloquence, and poverty of thought and frigid feeling mattered little, if the stock of such literary conceits was large enough.

Fronto of Cirta passed for the first orator of his day at Rome, and was honoured with the friendship of three Emperors, of whom the latest, Marcus Aurelius, had been his pupil, and was to the last a loving friend. When scholars heard early in this century that the letters which passed between the sovereign and the professor had been found in a palimpsest under

like Fronto.

the Acts of the Council of Chalcedon, they were full of eager interest to read them; but they soon turned with contempt from the tasteless pedantry and tawdry affectation of the style which was then so much in vogue at Rome. It is curious to find the rhetorician speaking of his favourite art as the only serious study of the age. "For philosophy," he thought, "no style was needed; no laboured periods, nor touching peroration. The student's intellect was scarcely ruffled while the lecturer went droning on in the dull level of his tedious disquisitions. Lazy assent or a few lifeless words alone were needed, and the audience might be even half-asleep while the 'firstly' and 'secondly' were leisurely set forth, and truisms disguised in learned phrases. That done, the learner's work was over: no conning over tasks by night, no reciting or declaiming, no careful study of the power of synonyms or the methods of translation." He thought it mere presumption of philosophy to claim the sphere of morals for its special care. The domain of rhetoric was wide enough to cover that as well as many another field of thought; her mission was to touch the feelings and to guide men by persuasive speech. For words were something infinitely sacred, too precious to be trifled with by any bungler in the art of speaking. As for the thoughts, they were not likely to be wanting if only the terms of oratory were fitly chosen. Yet, with all the pedant's vanity, we see disclosed to us in his familiar letters an honest, true, and simple-minded man, who was jealous for the honour of his literary craft, who lived contentedly on scanty means, and never abused his influence at court to advance himself to wealth or honour.

Few, like Fronto, were content to shine only with the lustre of their art. To live a Sophist's life was a pro-

verbial phrase for a career of sumptuous luxury. To turn from rhetoric to philosophy was marked by outward changes like that to the monk's cowl from the pleasures of the world. But it was in the Greek cities of the Empire that they paraded their magnificence with most assurance, and ruled supreme over an admiring public. Among the brilliant towns of Asia Minor, which were at this time at the climax of their wealth and splendour, there flourished an art and literature of fashion, to which the Sophists gave the tone as authors and critics.

At Smyrna above all, the sanctuary of the Muses and the metropolis of Asia, as it proudly styled itself, the famous Polemon lorded it without dispute, deigning to prefer that city for his home above the neighbouring rivals for his favour. When he went abroad, the chariot which bore him was decked with silver trappings and followed by a long train of slaves and hounds. So proud was his self-confidence that he was said to treat the municipalities as his inferiors, and emperors and gods only as his equals. Smyrna, the city of his choice, profited largely by the reputation of its townsman. Scholars flocked to it to hear his lectures. Jarring factions were abashed at his rebuke, and forgot their quarrels in his eulogies of peace. Monarchs honoured him with their favours, and lavished their bounty on his home: Hadrian even transferred his love from Ephesus to Smyrna, and gave the orator a noble sum to beautify the queen of cities. His self-esteem was fully equal to his great renown. When he went to Athens, unlike the other speakers who began with panegyrics on the illustrious city, he startled his hearers with the words, "You have the credit, men of Athens, of being accomplished critics of good style; I shall soon see if you deserve the praise." A young

Polemon.

aspirant of distinction came once to measure words with him, and asked him to name a time for showing off his powers. Nothing loth, he offered to speak off-hand, and after hearing him, the stranger slipped away by night to shun the confession of defeat. When Hadrian came to dedicate the stately works with which he had embellished Athens, the ceremony was not thought complete unless Polemon was sent for to deliver a sort of public sermon on the opening of the temple. When death came at last to carry him from the scene of all his triumphs, he said to the admirers who stood beside his bed, "See that my tomb is firmly closed upon me, that the sun may not see me at last reduced to silence."

Favorinus.

Ephesus, meantime, which took the second place among the cities of Ionia, had brought Favorinus from his native Arles to honour it with his brilliant talents. But neither of the great professors could brook a rival near his chair, and a war of epigrams and angry words was carried on between them, and was taken up with warmth by the partisans of each. At Pergamos, Aristocles was teaching still, after giving up philosophy and scandalizing serious minds by taking to the theatre and other haunts of pleasure. Each even of the lesser towns had its own school of rhetoric, and its own distinguished Sophist.

Herodes Atticus.

Nor could the intellectual society of Athens fail to have its shining light in all this galaxy of luminous talents. It had its University, with chairs endowed by government, and filled with teachers of distinction. But it had also a greater centre of attraction in its own Herodes Atticus, who devoted his enormous wealth, his stores of learning and his cultivated tastes, to do honour to his birthplace, and make her literary circles the admiration of the edu-

cated world. His father, who came of an old family at Athens, had found a treasure in his house so great that he feared to claim it till he was reassured by Nerva. He used it with lavish generosity, frequently keeping open house; and at his death nearly all the town was in his debt. No expense was spared in the education of his son, who studied under the first teachers of the day, and made such progress that he was taken to Pannonia as a youth to display his powers of rhetoric before the Emperor Hadrian. The young student's vanity was damped, however, by a signal failure, and he nearly drowned himself in the Danube in despair. Returning home in humbler mood, he gave himself once more to study. There and in Asia, where he served as an imperial commissioner, he amassed ample stores of learning and formed his style by intercourse with the greatest scholars of the day. After some years spent at Rome, he settled finally on his own estates, and became henceforth the central figure of Athenian society, which was by general consent the most refined and cultivated of the age, and the most free from the insolent parade of wealth.

The most promising of the students of the University were soon attracted to his side, where they found a liberal welcome and unfailing encouragement and help. Aulus Gellius gives a pleasant picture of the studious retreat in which he entertained them. "In our college life at Athens, Herodes Atticus often bade us come to him. In his country house of Cephissia we were sheltered from the burning heat of summer by the shade of the vast groves, and the pleasant walks about the mansion, whose cool site and sparkling basins made the whole neighbourhood resound with splashing waters and the song of birds." Here at one time or another came

most of the scholars who were to make a name in the great world, and who were glad to listen to the famous lecturer. A privileged few remained after the audience had dispersed, and were favoured with a course of special comments which were heard with rapt attention. Even the applause so usual in the Sophists' lecture halls was then suspended.

But if an orator of any eminence arrived at Athens and wished to say a word in public, Herodes came with his friends to do the honours of the day, to move the vote of thanks to the illustrious stranger, and to display all his practised skill in the tournament of rhetoric. Not indeed that the reception was so courteous always. One Philager had the imprudence to write an offensive letter to Herodes before he came to Athens. On his arrival the theatre in which he had intended to declaim was crowded with the admirers of the Athenian teacher, who had malicious pleasure in detecting an old harangue which was passed off before them as a new one, and hissed the poor Sophist off the stage when he tried vainly to recover credit. Nor did the talents of the orator save him always from a petty vanity. Aristides wished on one occasion to deliver the Panathenaic speech; and to disarm the opposition of his rival, whose jealousy he feared, he submitted to his criticism the draft of a weak and colourless address. But instead of this, when the day came to deliver it, the actual speech proved to be of far higher merit, and Herodes saw that he was duped.

One special object of his care was purity of diction. Not content with forming his style upon the best models of the past, he was known even to consult upon nice points of language an old hermit who lived retired in the heart of Attica. "He lives in the district," was his ex-

planation, "where the purest Attic always has been spoken, and where the old race has not been swept away by strangers." We may find a curious illustration of his affectation of archaic forms in the fact that some of the inscriptions of his monuments are written in Greek characters of a much earlier date, which seemingly in the enthusiasm of the antiquarian he was desirous to revive.

A like spirit of reverence for the past is shown in his regard for the great religious centres of Hellenic life. Not content with adorning Athens, like Hadrian, with stately works of art, he left the tokens of his fond respect at Delphi, Corinth, and Olympia, where new temples and theatres rose at his expense. There were few parts of Greece, indeed, which had not cause to thank the magnificent patron of the arts, whose taste inclined, after the fashion of the day, to the colossal, and was turned only with regret from the idea of cutting a canal through the Corinthian Isthmus.

In spite of all his glory and his lavish outlay, the Athenians wearied of their benefactor, or powerful enemies at least combined to crush him. Impeached before the governor of the province on charges of oppression, he was sent to Sirmium when Marcus Aurelius was busy with his Marcomannic war. Faustina had been prejudiced against him, the Emperor's little son was taught to lisp a prayer for the Athenians, and the great orator, broken down by bereavement and ingratitude, refused to exert his eloquence in his own behalf, and broke out even into bitter words as he abruptly left his sovereign's presence. But no charges could be proved against him, and the Emperor was not a man to deal harshly with his old friend for a hasty word.

Among the visitors at Cephissia, in the circle gathered

round Herodes, probably was Apuleius, who had left Carthage to carry on his studies in the lecture rooms and libraries of Athens. Philosopher and pietist, poet, romanticist, and rhetorician, he was an apt example of the manysidedness of the sophistic training, as it was then spread universally throughout the Roman Empire. He is a curious illustration of the social characteristics of the age, combining as he does in his own person, and expressing in his varied works, most of the moral and religious tendencies which are singly found elsewhere in other writers of these times.

Apuleius.

1°. There is no originality of thought or style. In every work we trace the influence of Greek models. His celebrated novel of the Transformation of a Man into an Ass is based upon a tale which is also found in Lucian; the stirring incidents of comedy or tragic pathos which are so strangely interspersed, the description of the robber band, the thrilling horrors of the magic art, the licentious gallantries therein described, are freely taken from the Greek romances which he found ready to his hand in many of the countries where he travelled. Even the beautiful legend of Cupid and of Psyche, which lies embedded like a pure vein of gold in the coarser strata of his fiction, is an allegoric fancy which belongs to a purer and a nobler mind than his. The style indeed is more attractive than that of any of the few Latin writers of his age, for Apuleius had a poet's fancy, and could pass with ease from grave to gay; but the author is overweighted by his learning, and spoils the merit of his diction by ill-adapted archaisms and tawdry ornaments of pretentious rhetoric.

2°. In him, as in the literature of the times, there is none of the natural simplicity of perfect art, but a constant striving for effect and a parade of ingenuity, as if

to challenge the applause of lecture-rooms in a society of mutual admiration. One of his works consists of the choice passages, the lively openings or touching perorations, gleaned from a number of such public lectures, to serve, it may be, as a sort of commonplace-book for the beginner's use.

3°. As a religious philosopher he illustrates the eclectic spirit then so common. From the theories of Plato he accepted the faith in a Supreme Being and an immortal soul; but instead of the types or ideas of the Greek sage, the unseen world was peopled by the fancy of Apuleius with an infinite hierarchy of demon agencies, going to and fro among the ways of men, startling them with phantom shapes, but making themselves at times the ministers of human will under the influence of magic arts and incantations.

4°. We find in him a curious blending of mocking insight and of mystic dread. He vividly expresses in the pages of his novel the imposture and the licence of the priestly charlatans who travelled through the world making capital out of the timorous credulity of the devout. Yet except Aristides no educated mind that we read of in that age was more intensely mastered by superstitious hopes and fears. The mysteries of all the ancient creeds have a powerful attraction for his fancy; he is eager to be admitted to the holy rites, and to pass within the veil which hides the secrets from the eyes of the profane. Nothing can exceed the fervour of his enthusiastic sentiment when he speaks of the revelation of the spirit world disclosed in the sacred forms before his kindling fancy.

5°. Finally, in his case we have brought vividly before our minds the difference between devotion and morality. The sensuality of heathendom is reflected for our study in

many a lascivious and disgusting page of Apuleius; and though he speaks of the chastity and self-denial needed for the pious votary to draw near to the God whom he adores, yet the abstinence must have been perfunctory indeed in one whose fancy could at times run riot in images so foul and lewd as to revolt every pure-minded reader.

We have seen that the scholars of the times were almost wholly living on the intellectual capital of former ages; in rhetoric and history, in religion and philosophy, they were looking to the past for guidance, and renewing the old jealousies of rival studies. In the credulous and manysided mind of Apuleius all the literary currents flowed on peacefully together side by side; but in Lucian we may note the culture of the age breaking all the idols of its adoration and losing every trace of faith and earnestness and self-respect.

Lucian.

The great satirist of Samosata was a Syrian by birth, though his genius and language were purely Greek. Apprenticed early to a sculptor, he soon laid down the carver's tools to devote himself to letters, and making little progress at the bar of Antioch, took to the Sophist's wandering life, and, like the others of his trade, courted the applause of idle crowds by formal panegyrics on the Parrot or the Fly. In middle life he grew wearied of such frivolous pursuits, and finding another literary vein more suited to his talents, composed the many dialogues and essays in which all the forms of thought and faith and social fashion pass before us in a long procession, each in turn to be stripped of its show of dignity and grace.

It was an easy matter to expose the follies of the legendary tales of early Greece, and many a writer had already tried to show that such artless imaginings of

childlike fancy were hopelessly at war with all moral codes and earnest thought. But it was left for Lucian to deal with them in a tone of entire indifference, without a trace of passion or excitement, or spirit of avowed attack. The gods and goddesses of old Olympus come forward in his dialogues without the flowing draperies of poetic forms which half disguised the unloveliness of many a fancy; they talk to each other of their vanities and passions simply and frankly, without reserve or shame, till the creations of a nation's childhood, brought down from the realms of fairyland to the realities of common life, seem utterly revolting in the nudities of homely prose.

Nor had Lucian more respect for the motley forms of eastern worship to which the public mind had lately turned in its strong need of something to adore. He painted in his works the moods of credulous sentiment which sought for new sources of spiritual comfort in the glow and mystery and excitement of those exotic rites; he described in lively terms the consternation of the deities of Greece when they found their council chamber thronged by the grotesque brotherhood of unfamiliar shapes, finding a voice at last in the protests of Momus, who came forward to resist their claims to equality with the immortals of Olympus. "Attis and Corybas and Sabazius, and the Median Mithras, who does not know a word of Greek and can make no answer when his health is drunk, these are bad enough; still they could be endured; but that Egyptian there, swathed like a mummy, with a dog's head on his shoulders, what claim has he, when he barks, to be listened to as a god? What means yon dappled bull of Memphis, with his oracles and train of priests? I should be ashamed to tell of all the ibises, apes, and goats, and thousand dei-

ties still more absurd, with which the Egyptians have deluged us, and I cannot understand, my friends, how you can bear to have them honoured as much as, or more even than yourselves. And, Jupiter, how can you let them hang those ram's horns on your head?" Momus is reminded that these are mysterious emblems, which an ignorant outsider must not mock at, and he readily admits that in those times only the initiated could distinguish between a monster and a god.

Lucian's banter did not flow from any deeper source of faith in a religion purer than those bastard forms of idol worship. He was entirely sceptical and unimpassioned, and the unseen world was to his thoughts animated by no higher life, nor might man look for anything beyond the grave. His attacks upon the established faith were far from being carried on in the spirit of a philosophic propaganda. He was unsparing in his mockery of the would-be sages who talked so grandly of the contempt for riches and for glory, of following Honour as their only guide, of keeping anger within bounds, and treating the great ones of the earth as equals, and who yet must have a fee for every lesson, and do homage to the rich. "They are greedy of filthy lucre, more passionate than dogs, more cowardly than hares, more lascivious than asses, more thievish than cats, more quarrelsome than cocks." He describes at length the indignities to which they are willing to submit as domestic moralists in the service of stingy and illiterate patrons, or in the train of some fine lady who likes to show at times her cultivated tastes, but degrades her spiritual adviser to the company of waiting maids and insolent pages, or even asks him to devote his care to the confinement of her favourite dog, and to the litter soon to be expected. One by one they pass before us in his pages, the several types of militant

philosophy,—the popular lecturer, the court confessor, the public missionary in Cynic dress, the would-be prophets, and the wonder-mongers, astrologers, and charlatans, all crowding to join the ranks of a profession where the only needful stock in trade was a staff, a mantle, and a wallet, with ready impudence and a fluent tongue.

Was Lucian concerned for the good name of the earnest thinkers of old time, the founders of the great schools of thought, whose dogmas were parodied by these impostors? Not so indeed. The old historic names appear before us in his auction scene; but the paltry biddings made for each show how he underrated them, and in his pictures of the realms of the departed spirits all the high professions of the famous moralists of Greece did not raise them above an ignominious want of dignity and courage.

Thus with mocking irony the scoffer rang out the funeral knell of the creeds and systems of the ancient world. Genius and heroism, high faith and earnest thought, seemed one by one to turn to dust and ashes under the solvent of his merciless wit. Religion was a mere syllabus of old wives' fables or a creaking machinery of supernatural terrors; philosophy was an airy unreality of metaphysic cobwebs; enthusiasm was the disguise of knaves and badge of dupes; life was an ignoble scramble uncheered by any rays of higher light and unredeemed by any faith or hope from a despairing self-contempt.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ADMINISTRATIVE FORS OF THE IMPERIAL GOVERNMENT.

THE imperial ruler governed with unqualified authority. No checks or balances or constitutional safeguards were provided by the theory of the state, and the venerable forms which lingered on existed mainly by his sufferance. The Curule offices remained only as part of the showy ceremonial of the life of Rome, but with no substantial power. The senate met to help the monarch with their counsels, or to register his decrees in formal shapes; but the reins had passed entirely from their hands. The local liberties throughout the provinces were little meddled with, and municipal self rule provoked, as yet, no jealousy; but it might be set aside at any moment by a Cæsar's will, or its machinery abused as an engine of oppression. Meantime, however, the transition from the unsystematic forms of the Republic was only slowly going on, and the agents of the central government were few compared with those of the widespread bureaucracy of later days.

The imperial ruler was an absolute sovereign,

The imperial household had been organized at first like that of any Roman noble. Educated slaves or freedmen, commonly of Greek extraction, wrote the letters, kept the books, or managed the accounts in wealthy houses, and filled a great variety of posts, partly menial, partly confidential. In default of ministers of state and public functionaries of tried experience, the early Emperors had used their own domestic servants to mul-

and his ministers were at first his own domestics,

tiply their eyes and ears and hands for the multitudinous business to be transacted. Weak rulers had been often tools in the hands of their own insolent freedmen, who made colossal fortunes by working on their master's fears or selling his favour to the highest bidder.

But the Emperors of the second century were too strong and self-contained to stoop to the meanness of such backstairs intrigue, and we hear little in their days of the sinister influence of the imperial freedmen. But the offices which they had filled in direct attendance on the ruler were raised in seeming dignity, though shorn perhaps of actual power, when Hadrian placed in them knights who might aspire to rise higher on the ladder of promotion. Of such posts there were four of special trust and confidence.

though afterwards knights.

1°. First came the office of the Privy Purse (a rationibus), which controlled all the accounts of the sovereign's revenues, and of the income of the Fiscus. The poet Statius describes in lofty style the importance and variety of the cares which thus devolved upon a powerful freedman who held the post for several reigns. "The produce of Iberian gold mines, of the Egyptian harvests, of the pearl-fisheries of the Eastern seas, of the flocks of Tarentum, of the transparent crystal made in Alexandrian factories, of the forests of Numidia, of the ivory of India, whatever the winds waft from every quarter into port—all is entrusted to his single care. The outgoings are also his concern. The supplies of all the armies pass daily through his hands, the necessary sums to stock the granaries of Rome, to build aqueducts and temples, to deck the palaces of Cæsar, and to keep the mints at work. He has scant time for sleep or food, none

The most important of these were 1°. a rationibus (treasurer).

for social intercourse, and pleasure is a stranger to his thoughts."

2°. The prince's Secretary (ab epistulis) required of course a high degree of literary skill, as well as the powers of an accomplished penman. "He has," says the same poet of another freedman, "to speed the missives of the monarch through the world, to guide the march of armies, to receive the glad news of victory from the Rhine, the Danube, the Euphrates, from the remotest lands of Thule, whither the conquering eagles have already made their way. His hand prepares the officers' commissions, and lets men know who have gained the post of centurion or tribune. He has to ask if the waters of the Nile have risen high enough for a good harvest, if rain has fallen in Africa, and to make a thousand like enquiries; not Isis, nor Mercury himself, has so many messages of moment." In later days there were two departments of the office, for the language of Greece and for that of Italy. The former of the two was coveted by the most famous scholars of the age, and was looked upon as the natural reward for purity of style and critical discernment. It led in time to the higher rank and the substantial emoluments of office.

2°. Ab epistulis (secretary).

3°. It was the duty of another minister (a libellis), to open the petitions or complaints intended for his master's ear, and probably to make abstracts of their contents. If we may trust Seneca's account the duties were arduous enough, since Polybius, who discharged them, had little time to nurse his private sorrows. "Thou hast so many thousand men to hear, so many memorials to set in order. To lay such a mass of business, that flows in from the wide world, in fitting method before the eyes

3°. a libellis (clerk of petitions).

of thy great prince, thou must have thyself unfaltering courage. Thou must not weep, for thou hast so many weeping petitioners to hear. To dry the tears of so many who are in danger, and would fain win their way to the mercy of thy gracious Cæsar, thou must needs dry thine own eyes first."

4°. a cubiculo (chamberlain).

4°. The Chamberlains often attained to large influence by their talents and address; but there seemed something menial in the duties of the office, which was therefore filled by slaves or freedmen, though, as the court adopted more of the sentiment and language of the East, the overseer of the sacred bedchamber (præpositus sacri cubiculi) filled a larger place in public thought, and gained at times complete ascendancy over a weak or vicious monarch, like the mayors of the palace over puppet kings in France.

The Privy Council (amici Cæsaris).

Of far higher social dignity were the official friends of Cæsar (amici Cæsaris), the notables of Rome who were honoured with his confidence, and called on for advice as members as a sort of Privy Council or Consistory, which met in varying numbers at the discretion of the prince, to debate with him on the affairs of state. It was an old custom with great Roman nobles to divide their friends according to gradations of their rank and influence. The Emperor's court was formed on the same model, and it was of no slight moment to the aspirant after honours to be ranked in one or other of the two great privileged classes. Out of these were chosen the companions (comites, counts) of the prince in all his travels, who journeyed with him at his cost, and were entertained by him at his table. In the first century the rank had proved a dangerous eminence. With moody and

suspicious tyrants, a word, a look, had proved enough to hurl the courtier from his post of honour. But in the period before us the lot was a far happier one. The Privy Councillors were treated with a marked respect, and by the Antonines at least they were not burdened with the duties of personal attendance on the prince, or the mere etiquette of social intercourse, save when the business of state required their presence. At last the term became a purely honorary title, and the great functionaries throughout the empire were styled the friends or counts of Cæsar.

The imperial officers were not appointed, like the ministers of state in modern times, to great departments, such as War, the Home Office, the Exchequer; but each held a fraction of delegated power within local limits carefully prescribed. The city of Rome, the prince's bodyguard, the urban watch, a province or an army, were put under the command of officers who looked only to the Emperor for orders. Two of these posts towered high above the rest in dignity and trust.

(1) The Præfect of the City represented the Emperor in his absence, and maintained civil order in the capital. The police of Rome lay wholly in his sphere of competence, with summary powers to proceed against slaves or disturbers of the peace, out of which grew gradually the functions of a High Court of Criminal Jurisdiction.

The Præfect of the City.

(2) The Præfect of the Prætorian soldiers was at first only the commander of the few thousand household troops who served as the garrison of Rome. While the legions were far away from the frontier, the temper of the Prætorians was of vital moment, and the Præfects might and did dispose of the safety of a throne. Sometimes their loyalty seemed

The Præfect of the Prætorian Guards.

to be secured by boons and honours, or by marriage ties; sometimes two were named together, to balance each other by their rivalries; but they were always dangerous to their master, till in the fourth century the power of the sword was wholly taken from them and lodged in the hands of separate commanders. Already the greatest jurists of the day had been appointed to the office, to replace the Emperor on the seat of justice, and it became at last the supreme court of appeal in civil jurisdiction.

The whole of the Roman empire, save Italy alone, was divided into provinces, and in each the central government was represented by a ruler sent from Rome.

The Provincial Governors,

For the peaceful lands long since annexed, where no armed force was needed, a governor (proconsul or proprætor) was chosen by the senate, in whose name the country was administered. For border lands, or others where there was any danger of turbulence or civil feud, a lieutenant (legatus) of the Emperor ruled in his master's name, and held the power of the sword. There were doubtless cases still of cruelty and greed; but the worst abuses of republican misgovernment had been long since swept away. The prince or his councillors kept strict watch and ward, and sharply called offenders to account; the provincial notables sat in the imperial senate, in which every real grievance could find a champion and a hearing. There was a financial agent (procurator) of the sovereign in each country, ready to note and to report all treasonable action; despatches travelled rapidly by special posts organized by the government along the great highways. The armed force was seldom lodged in the hands of civil rulers; the payment of fixed salaries for office made indirect gains seem far less venial; and the old

sentiment was gone that the world was governed in the interest of Rome or of its nobles. The responsibilities of power raised the tone of many of the rulers, and moral qualities which had languished in the stifling air of the great city flourished on the seat of justice before the eyes of subject peoples.

A certain court or retinue followed each governor to his province, some of which received a definite sanction and a salary from the state. There were trusted intimates on whose experience or energy he might rely, trained jurists to act as assessors in the courts, and to guide his judgment on nice points of law, young nobles eager to see life in foreign lands, literary men to amuse his leisure moments on the journey, or to help in drafting his despatches, practised accountants for financial business, surveyors or architects for public works, together with personal attendants to minister to their master's wants. None of these, save perhaps the notaries (scribæ), were permanent officials, and their number on the whole was small, and quite disproportionate to the size and population of the province. For the agents of the central government were few, and local liberties were still respected, though there were ominous signs of coming changes.

and their suite.

The imperial rulers had shown little jealousy as yet of municipal self-rule, and almost every town was a unit of free-life, with many administrative forms of local growth still undisturbed. Magistrates were elected year by year in each; town councils formed of leading citizens and ex-officials ruled all concerns of public interest; general assemblies of the townsmen met from time to time, and took an active part in the details of civic life, long after the

Local magistrates

comitia of Rome were silenced. Nor were these merely idle forms which disguised the reality of servitude. Men still found scope for active energy in managing the affairs of their own towns; they still saw prizes for a passionate ambition in the places and the honours which their fellow-countrymen could give.

We have only to follow the career of some of the leading provincials of the age, we have only to turn over the copies of the numerous inscriptions left on stone or bronze, to see how much remained in outward show at least, of the old forms of republican activity.

and local freedom,

A Herodes Atticus could still be a commanding figure in the life of Greece: a Dion Chrysostom could find occasion for his eloquence in soothing the passions of assemblies and reconciling the feuds of neighbouring cities. No sacrifices seemed too costly for the wealthy who wished to be dignitaries in their native boroughs. To gain a year or two of office they spent vast sums in building libraries or aqueducts, or baths, or schools, or temples, squandering sometimes a fortune in the extravagant magnificence of largesses or shows. They disputed with each other not only for the office of duumvir or of ædile, but for honorary votes of every kind, for precedence at the theatres, for statues whose heads were to be presently replaced with those of other men, for a flattering inscription even on the building which the city had accepted at their hands.

But if we look below the surface, and listen to moralists like Plutarch, who best reflect the social features of provincial life, we may have cause to think that public spirit was growing fainter every day, and that the securities for freedom and self-rule were very few.

(1) Rome was the real centre of attraction as of old,

the aim of all ambitious hopes. Local distinctions were a natural stepping-stone to a place in the Senate or the Privy Council, and employments else of little worth found a value as the lowest rounds of a ladder of promotion, on which none could mount high until they had made a name at Rome. Men of good families dropped their ancestral titles and latinized their names to pass as descendants of the conquerors of the world. In a spirit of flattery and mean compliance, the municipal authorities abridged with their own hands their ancient freedom, tore up their old traditional charters, consulted the governor at every turn, and laid humbly at his feet the reins of power.

with few guarantees of permanence, as illustrated by Plutarch.

(1) The municipalities courted interference,

Of such unconscious traitors Plutarch speaks with just severity. He reminds his readers that the invalids who have been wont to bathe and eat only at the bidding of their doctor, soon lose the healthy enjoyment of their strength; and so too those who would appeal to Cæsar or his servants in every detail of public life, find to their cost that they are masters of themselves no longer; they degrade senate, magistrates, courts, and people, and reduce their country to a state of impotent and debasing servitude.

He would have them cherish no illusions, and give themselves no airs of independence, for real power had passed out of their hands; but it was needless folly to seem to court oppression, or to appear incapable of using the liberties which still remained. For these lasted on by sufferance only, and had no guarantees of permanence; the old federal leagues had passed away, and there was no bond of union between the cities save the tie of loyalty to the Emperor at Rome. As units of free

life, linked to each other by some system of provincial parliaments, they might have given effective utterance to the people's will, and have formed organized centres of resistance to oppression, but such assemblies can be hardly traced, save here and there in feeble forms, and the imperial mechanism was brought to bear directly on a number of weak and isolated atoms.

(2) the governors began to meddle more,

(2) The proconsuls or lieutenants of Cæsar grew impatient of any show of independence or any variety of local usage. Not content with the maintenance of peace and order, and with guarding the interests of state, they began to meddle in all the details of civic life. A street-riot, or a financial crisis, or an architect's mistake in public works, was excuse enough for superseding lower powers, and changing the whole machinery of local politics. Sometimes immunities were swept away, and old customs set aside by self-willed rulers greedy of extended power, ignorant even of the language of the subject peoples, and careless of the associations of the past. Sometimes conscientious men like Pliny, who rose above sinister or selfish aims, would interpose in the interests of symmetry and order, or wished to prove their loyalty and zeal by carrying out their master's plans with scant regard for old privileges or historic methods.

(3) and the Cæsar on the throne was more and more appealed to.

(3) The imperial system was one of personal rule, and the stronger and more self-contained the Cæsar on the throne, the more was he tempted to make his government felt in every department of his power. The second century was the age of able and untiring rulers, whose activity was felt in every part of their wide empire. The ministers who knew the temper of their sovereigns appealed to them in every case of doubt, and the impe-

rial posts along the great high roads were kept in constant work with the despatches which went to and fro between every province and the centre. From distant Bithynia came Pliny's questions about a bath, a guild of firemen, the choice of a surveyor, or the status of a runaway slave who had enlisted in the army; and Trajan thought it needful to write special letters to forbid a couple of soldiers being shifted from their post or to sanction the removal of a dead man's ashes.

Under cautious princes like the Antonines the effects of an absolutism so unqualified were for a time disguised; but the evils of misgovernment, which in the last century had been mainly felt at Rome, might now, as the empire grew more centralized, be known in every land. They were not hid from the eyes of Plutarch, who preferring as he does monarchic rule to every other social form, and looking on the sovereign as the representative of heaven on earth, yet insists on the grave danger to the world if the prince has not learnt the lessons of self-mastery. "He should be like the sun, which moves most slowly when it attains its highest elevation."

We shall better understand the perils of the system then adopted if we look forward to some of the actual evils of the centralized monarchy of the later empire.

The actual evils of a later age.

1°. The sums which flowed into the treasury of Rome seem to have been still moderate, if compared with the vast extent of her dominions, and the wealth of many of the subject lands. Much of the expense of government fell upon the local resources of the towns, which had their own domains, or levied special taxes for the purpose; but the rest may be brought under three heads, (1) that of the pay and pensions for the soldiers of the legions, (2) of the

1°. The pressure of taxation,

largesses of corn or money, and (3) of the prince's civil list, including the charges of his household and the salaries of public servants. The first and second varied little in amount; there were few changes in the number of troops or the expenses of the service save in crises like the Dacian or Marcomannic war; at Rome the recipients of corn were kept at nearly the same figure, and it was dangerous to neglect the imperial bounties to the populace of the great towns. The third was the division in which a thrifty ruler might retrench, or a prodigal exhaust his coffers by extravagance. The question was one of personal economy or self-indulgence, for the civil servants were not many, and their salaries as yet formed no great item in the budget. It was by the wantonness of insolent caprices that tyrants such as Caligula or Nero drained their treasuries, and were driven to refill them by rapine or judicial murder. But while they struck at wealthy victims they spared the masses of the people, and it was left to an unselfish ruler like Vespasian to face the outcry and the indignation caused by a heavier system of taxation.

In general the empire had, in that respect at least, been a boon to the whole Roman world, for it had replaced the licence and extortion of provincial governors and farmers of the tithes by a system of definite tariff and control. The land-tax levied in every country beyond Italy had taken commonly the form of a tithe or fraction of the produce, farmed by middlemen (publicani), and collected by their agents, who were often unscrupulous and venal. It was a method wasteful to the state and oppressive to the subjects, and full of inequalities and seeming hardships. The first step taken by Augustus was to carry out a general survey of the empire as a needful condition of a

moderate at first,

fairer distribution of the burdens; another was to control the licence of the publicans by a financial agent in each province, holding a commission directly from the prince.

Further steps were gradually taken, and by the time of Marcus Aurelius the system of middlemen was swept away. Tithes were not levied as before in kind, but a land-tax (tributum soli) of uniform pressure took their place. Italy had long enjoyed immunities under the Republic, when she lived upon the plunder of the world; but custom-duties (portoria) were imposed on her by the first Cæsar, and tolls at the markets (centesima rerum venalium) by Augustus, while succession duties (vicesima hereditatum) were levied in the course of the same reign in spite of the indignant outcry of the wealthier Romans. These or their equivalents under other names were the chief sources of revenue, to which we have to add the lands and mines which passed into the imperial domains as the heritage of the state or of the royal houses of the provinces, together with the proceeds of legacies and confiscations.

There was no large margin, it would seem, for personal extravagance or a social crisis; but the Antonines were happily of frugal habits, and one of them, as we have seen, parted with the heir-looms of the palace rather than lay fresh burdens on his people. Future rulers were less scrupulous than they. The brilliancy of personal display, the costly splendours borrowed from the Eastern courts, the charge of a rapidly increasing civil service, the corruption of the agents of the treasury, the pensions paid to the barbarian leaders—these and other causes led to a steady drain upon the exchequer which it was harder every year to keep supplied. Fresh dues and tolls of various kinds were frequently imposed; the

became gradually more and more intense.

burdens on the land grew more oppressive as the prosperity of the wealth-producing classes waned, till at last a chorus of many voices rises to deplore the general misery caused by the pressure of taxation, the insolence of the collectors in the towns, the despair of the poor artisans when the poll-tax is demanded, parents selling their children into slavery, women driven to a life of shame, landowners flying from the exhausted fields to take refuge even with barbarian peoples, and all signs of universal bankruptcy.

2°. The administrative system gradually became more bureaucratic and more rigidly oppressive. In early days the permanent civil servants of the state were few in number. At Rome we read of notaries or accountants (scribæ), of javelin men (lictores), and ushers (apparitores) in personal attendance on the magistrates. These were seemingly allowed to form themselves in guilds in defence of their professional rights, and gained a sort of vested interest in their office, which could at times be even bought or sold.

2°. The increase of the bureaucracy

But their number and importance was not great. We have little evidence of like classes in the provinces, and the governor's suite went out and returned with him as his own friends or retainers, while doubtless servile labour was largely used upon the spot.

Such a practice was too rude and immature to last long after the activity of the central government became more intense. In the course of time, therefore, the whole character of such official work was changed; the accountants and the writers rapidly increased in number as the business grew upon their hands, and the state secured its servants a professional status. This, strange to say,

was followed by oppressive restrictions on the Civil Service.

was called a military service (militia); many of the grades of rank adopted in different stages of employment were borrowed from the army; a certain uniform was worn at last, and commissions were made out in the Emperor's name, while a sort of martial discipline was observed in the bureaux (scrinia). Honours and privileges and illustrious names were given to the heads of the official hierarchy; but the state began to tighten its grasp upon its agents, to require a long period of service, to refuse permission to retire until a substitute was found, to force the children to learn their fathers' craft and step one day into their places, till the whole civil service gradually became one large official caste, in which each generation was bound to a lifelong servitude, disguised under imposing names and military forms.

3°. A like series of changes may be traced in a higher social order. In all the lands through which Greek or Italian influence had spread, some sort of town-council had existed as a necessary element of civic life. The municipal laws of the first Cæsars defined the functions of this order (ordo decurionum, curia), which like the Roman Senate was composed of ex officials, or other citizens of dignity and wealth.

3°. Municipal honours became onerous charges.

For a century or more, while the tide of public life flowed strongly in the provinces, the status of a councillor (decurio, curialis) was prized, and leading men spent time and money freely in the service of their fellows. As the empire grew more centralized, local distinctions were less prized, and we find in the inscriptions fewer names of patriots willing, like Herodes Atticus, to enrich their native cities with the monuments of their lavish bounty. As municipal honours were less valued, the old relation was inverted, and the councillors

had to fill in turn the public offices, which instead of dignities were felt to be oppressive burdens.

By the time of Trajan we find the traces of unwillingness to serve, and in the reign of Marcus Aurelius the reluctance had grown already more intense. The sophist Aristides tells us frankly of his eagerness to escape from civic changes, how he wept and fasted, prayed and pleaded to his gods, till he saw the vision of white maids who came to set him free, and found the dream was followed by imperial despatches which contained the dispensation so much longed for.

The central government, in its concern, devised more marks of honour and distinction; but still men grew less willing to wear the gilded chains, for the responsibilities of office grew more weighty. The order of *decuriones* had not only to meet as it best could the local needs, but to raise the imperial taxes, to provide for the commissariat of the armies, and keep the people in good humour by spectacles and corn and grants of money. Men sought to quit their homes and part with their estates, and hoard as best they could the proceeds of the sale, if only they could free themselves from public duties. But still the state pursued them with its claims; the service of the councillors became a charge on landed property, the citizen of means was a functionary who might not quit his post. He might not sell his fields, for the treasury had a lien on them; he might not travel at his ease, for that would be a waste of public time; he might not live unmarried, for his duty was to provide children to succeed him when he died, he might not even take Holy Orders when he would, for folks of narrow means were good enough for that, but "he must stay in the bosom of his native country, and, like the minister of holy things, go through the ceaseless round of solemn service."

In their despair the *decuriones* try to fly, but they are hunted down without compunction. Their names are posted in the proclamations with runaways and criminals of the lowest class; they are tracked even to the precincts of the churches, to the mines and quarries where they seek shelter, to the lowest haunts of the most degraded outcasts. In spite of all such measures their numbers dwindled constantly, and had to be recruited, while land was given to the newly enrolled to qualify them for the duties of the service. Still the cry was for more to fill the vacant offices of state, and the press-gang gathered in fresh tax-gatherers—for they were little more—from every class. The veteran's son, if weak or idle, the coward who had mutilated himself to be unfit for soldiers' work, the deacon who had unfrocked himself or been degraded—all were good enough for this—the priestly gambler even, who had been counted hopeless and excommunicate, and who was declared to be possessed of an evil spirit, was sent not to a hospital but to the *curia*.

4°. Trades and industries became hereditary burdens.

4°. The same tendencies were at work meantime on every side in other social grades, for in wellnigh all alike the imperial system first interfered with healthy energy by its centralised machinery, discouraged industry by heavy burdens, and then appealed to force to keep men to the taskwork which they shunned. Its earlier rulers had indeed favoured the growth of trade and the development of industry, had respected the dignity of the labour of free artisans, and fostered the growth of guilds and corporations which gave the sense of mutual protection and self-respect to the classes among which they sprung. Bounties and privileges were granted to many of such unions, which specially existed for the

service of the state, for the carrying trade of Roman markets, or the labours of the post, the arsenals, the docks.

Over these the control became gradually more stringent as the spur of self-interest ceased to prompt the workers to continued effort. Men must be chained, like galley slaves if need be, to their work, rather than the well-being of society should suffer, or government be discredited in vital points. The principle adopted in their case was extended to many other forms of industry which languished from the effects of higher taxation or unwise restrictions, and were likely to be deserted in despair. In the rural districts also sturdy arms must be kept to the labours of the field, lest the towns be starved by their neglect; peasants must not be allowed to roam at will, or betake themselves to other work, but be tied to the fields they cultivated in a state of villeinage or serfdom. The armies could not safely be exposed to the chances of volunteer recruits; but the landowners must provide their quota, or the veterans bring up their children in the camp, or military colonies be planted on the frontier with the obligation of perpetual service.

So, high and low, through every grade of social status, the tyranny of a despotic government was felt. It drained the life-blood from the heart of every social organism; it cut at the roots of public spirit and of patriotic pride, and dried up the natural sources of unselfish effort. And then, in self-defence, it chained men to their work, and made each department of the public service a sort of convict labour in an hereditary caste.

But the toil of slaves is but a sorry substitute for the enlightened industry of freemen; and the empire grew poorer as its liberties were cramped. It grew weaker

also in its energies of self-defence, for when the barbarians knocked loudest at the gates, instead of the strong cohesion of a multitude of centres of free life bound to each other by a thousand interlacing sympathies, they found before them only towns and villages standing alone in helpless isolation, and vainly looking round them for defence, while the central mechanism was sadly out of gear.

The imperial Colossus seemingly had dwindled to an inorganic group of loose atoms.

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